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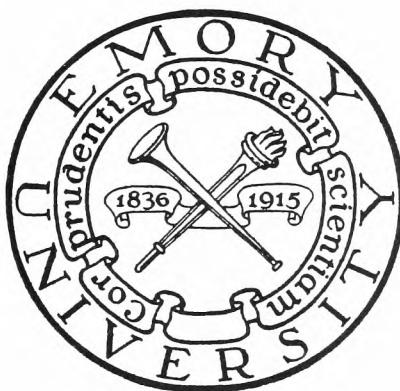
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P R E F A C E

IN the following pages are narrated much of real life and adventure, with much that is historically true ; but these passages I leave to the inquiring reader to discover or to separate. The localities are all described from old works or other sources, as they existed in the time of the hero

Many of the characters are real, and belong to history, such as the Vicomte de Turenne, De Toneins, Vaudemont, Raoul d'Ische, the Marechal de la Force, the Marquis of Gordon, and others. The Count de Bitche was also a veritable personage who disgraced those days, and his abduction of the Countess of Lutzelstein was a real event.

The story of Tushielaw is an old Scottish legend.

So great was the French spirit for duelling in that age, that many of the clergy wore swords. Thus, in 1617, we find the Cardinal de Guise *drawing his rapier* upon the

Duke of Nevers Gonzaga, and it is notorious that Cardinal de Retz fought a great many duels when, as an abbé, he was soliciting the Archbishopric of Paris.

Some notes of interest, regarding the Scots and Scottish Guard in France will be found at the end of this Romance, in which I have endeavoured to portray something of the free and reckless character of the French court and army during the reign of Louis XIII.,—a state of morals gradually introduced by his more dissolute predecessors, and which, under the Grand Monarque, increased, together with tyranny and misgovernment, until the foundations of the throne were sapped, the old dynasty of France expatriated, and her nobility destroyed.

Edinburgh, April 1858.

ARTHUR PLANE;
OR,
THE HUNDRED CUIRASSIERS.

CHAPTER I.

THE PRETTY MASK.

IT was about the end of April, 1634—twelve had tolled from the huge dark towers of Notre Dame, and the night was dark and gusty.

I found myself bewildered among the intricate and gloomy streets of old Paris; having lost the way to my hotel, the *Golden Fleur de Lys*, in the ancient Rue d'Ecosse. In my ignorance of the thoroughfares and of their names, having been repeatedly misled by wicked gamins and practical jokers, midnight found me completely entangled among the narrow alleys that bordered on the terrible locality of the Place de la Grève, the lofty, quaint and peculiar mansions of which towered on three sides, while on the fourth, lay the Seine, whose muddy waters have hidden the gashed corpse of many a murdered man—have swept away the red débris of many a massacre, and been the last refuge of many a desperate and despairing heart.

Against the dark sky, I could distinguish the darker outlines of the steep sharp gables that overhung the Place, with their fronts covered by grotesque sculptures in wood and stone. A few lights twinkled feebly amid the masses of that great pillared edifice of the days of Charles V., named from him

the *Maison au Dauphin*; and the flickering oil lamps that swung mournfully to and fro, at the ends of the dark alley, cast a sickly light upon the fantastic projections of the houses, and on the whitewashed turret of the ancient pillory and stone gibbet, whereon so many thousands of human beings, during ages past, have died in agony and disgrace.

Here then, in this place of pleasant associations, I—who had arrived in Paris but the night before—found myself alone, wandering in ignorance of the way, at midnight—I, a Scot and stranger, with my whole worldly possessions about me, to wit, ten of those gay *louis d'ors* (first coined by Louis XIII.), a good suit of black velvet, a fair cloak of *serge de Berri*, worth about ten pistoles; but having a good sword, that had notched more than one crown in its time, with a pair of steel Scottish pistols in my girdle engraved with my coat of arms and the significant legend,

“He who gives quickly, gives twice.”

Moreover I was only twenty years of age—active, determined even to recklessness, and at all times master of my weapons, if not of my temper.

In a secret pocket of my doublet, I carried a letter of recommendation from Esme Stuart, who was Lord of Aubigne, Duke of Lennox, Lord High Admiral and Great Chamberlain of Scotland, to Madame Clara, the mistress of Louis XIII., who had created her Comtesse d'Amboise. In wit and beauty she was the rival of Nînon de l'Enclos, and the superior of the lovely Marion de l'Orme, being one of those bold, artful, and beautiful women who in all ages have entangled the politics and swayed the destinies of France; and on this missive from the duke, who had known Madame Clara in her girlish days, when she was a dame d'honneur, and he a gay captain of the Scottish archers—and had known her more intimately, perhaps, than the most Christian king could have relished—all my hope of success in the French service

depended ; for by the ruin and misfortunes which their own patriotism had brought upon my family, I was landless, homeless, all but penniless and an outcast from my country—a country where it is ever the doom and curse of patriotism and purity of spirit to be stifled and crushed under the heels of envy, calumny, avarice, and sectarianism.

The last note of the vast bell of Notre Dame de Paris, had pealed away over the darkened city, when I paused and looked about me.

The ends of the streets and alleys were closed by iron chains, over which I had fallen more than once. None of the city watch were visible, and save myself no one seemed abroad, for I heard no sound save the mournful creaking of the oil lamps, which swung, few and far between, in the centre of the way, or the murmur of the river as it chafed against the wooden abutments of the quay and poured through the arches of the Pont de Notre Dame.

While surveying the river on one side, and the pillared recesses of the Maison au Dauphin on the other, espying a fancied lurker in every shadowy depth, all the old stories I had heard of Paris floated through my mind ; for I had been told that there were quarters of the city, such as the infamous Cour des Miracles, into which neither the sergeants of the Provost, nor the officers of the Chatelet dared to venture—strongholds of vice and villany, where mohawks, midnight assassins, house-breakers, cloak-snatchers, cut-purses, Spanish gypsies, Italian musicians, German mountebanks, Jew vendors of quack medicine, and women whose fall, like that of angels, had brought them far from heaven, repaired by day ; and from whence, like a living and pestilent flood, they issued by night to ensnare, and waylay the unwary and the wandering.

Then there were lacqueys, pages, nobles, and gallants, who went about masked, muffled, and armed to the teeth, fighting the watch, insulting the peaceful, carrying off pretty girls, *sabre à la main*, and committing such outrages that in 1607 it

was computed that since the accession of Henry IV the number of French gentlemen slain in duels alone amounted to *four thousand*.*

I thought of these things, and keeping my cloak well about me with one hand, kept the other on the pommel of my sword.

Turning to quit the Place de la Grève (I have learned all the local names since that eventful night), I stood a moment irresolute whether to take the alley which leads into the Rue Coutellerie and from thence towards the Faubourg St. Martin, when a cry arrested my steps. It seemed to come from the shadow of Rolande's Tower, an old building half Roman and half Gothic, in a cell of which Madame de Rolande, the daughter of a French crusader, died of grief in the days of St. Louis, and which stands at the corner of the Place, near the Rue de la Tannerie and close to the river.

Then a woman rushed towards me exclaiming,

‘Monsieur, if you are a gentleman you will protect me!’

‘With my life, madame,’ I replied.

‘With your sword would be more to the purpose,’ said she, as I took her hand; ‘by your voice you are a Scottish archer?’

‘Would to heaven I were! I am but a poor gentleman, forced to leave his own country and seek military service in France.’

‘Your name—’

‘Arthur Blane, of Blanerne,—but who are they that pursue you?’ I asked, while endeavouring to make out her features, which were partly concealed by a black velvet mask, through the holes of which her eyes sparkled with no common animation. By her voice she seemed young; by her bearing noble; and by her gloveless hands, which were small, white, and soft, I was assured that she was beautiful. ‘Lady,’ I resumed; ‘to where shall I conduct you?’

* Lomenie—*Mém. Hist. de France*.

‘On your honour, I charge you neither to conduct nor follow me.’

‘But you were molested—’

‘By two tipsy gallants who, deeming me a grisette, I presume, have pursued me all the way from the Logis de Lorraine ; but hark ! you hear them,—I must leave you—’

‘Alone—alone and *here* !’

‘Yes.’

‘Oh, madame, think of the hour, the place—your beauty—’

‘Enough ; a carriage waits me at the Pont de Notre Dame.’

‘Tis well,’ said I, unsheathing my sword ; ‘your molesters shall not pass this way if I can prevent them.’

‘Oh ! a thousand thanks brave sir,’ said she with a shudder on seeing the shining steel, and holding out her ungloved hand.

‘Madame, I risk my life for you, and you give me but your hand to kiss !’

‘What ! do you too take me for a grisette ?’ she asked with a haughty smile as she lifted her little mask. I kissed her cheek, and in a moment she slipped from my arm and was gone ! Her face was more than beautiful ; but I had no time to think upon it, and stood sword in hand in the centre of the Quai de la Grève, barring the passage of two men, cloaked, masked, and armed, who came boldly up to me, singing with the brusque air of tipsy roisterers.

CHAPTER II.

A CASE OF RAPIERS.

I DREADED being robbed and consequently of perchance losing the duke’s letter to Madame d’Amboise—a letter which contained the destiny of my life. I had nothing valuable to lose besides but my life, and, strange to say, I valued it less than

my letter. Wrapped in my cloak, I stood with rapiers ~~and~~ guard right in the centre of the Quai, while the cavaliers came close up to me. Both were, as I have said, masked, armed, and cloaked; and moreover were taller and, to all appearance, stouter than I. One was singing that gay and lively song in which the people of Lower Normandy still remember the mother of the English conqueror—the wife of Herluin, the Comte de Conteville; and his companion joined vigorously in the gay chorus.

‘ De Guillaume-le-Conquérant
Chantons l’historiette;
Il nâquit cet illustre enfant
D’une simple amourette.
Le hazard fait souvent les grands.
Vive le fils d’Harlette !
Normands,
Vive le fils d’Harlette !’

‘ Fille d’un simple pelletier
Elle était gentilette:
Robert en galant chevalier,
Vint lui conter fleurette;
L’amour égale tous les rangs:
Vive le fils d’Harlette !
Normands,
Vive le fils d’Harlette !’

Pausing in his song, the singer came scornfully up to me with one hand on his sword and the other on his moustache, saying,

‘ Pardieu—you saw one of the most inconstant of God’s creatures pass this way?’

‘ To the point, monsieur,’ said I, ‘ what do you mean?’

‘ A woman—you saw her?’

‘ Yes,’ I replied, still barring the way with my sword.

‘ Pretty, and with a modest air which would have deceived the devil himself.’

‘Perhaps so.’

‘And which way went she?’ demanded both imperiously.

‘My sword is drawn to answer you,’ I replied, considerably ruffled by the brusquerie of their bearing.

‘Stay, chevalier,’ said one, laughing; ‘let the poor man alone—’tis only some bourgeois seized by a fit of valour.’

‘Peste, monseigneur, I see by a glance that he is no bourgeois; and where is his lantern?’

‘You have drunk like a Swiss to-night, chevalier, and cannot see it.’

‘Which way did our little grisette go?’ said the other, unsheathing his sword with a threatening air; ‘say, say, or pardieu, I will spit you like a sparrow.’

‘Right,’ added the other, furiously; ‘morbleu! this wearies me. Run him through the body if you will—he is only an Italian scaramouche by his patois. Be quick with your work; for, sabre de bois! it will not do for you or me, to be caught brawling at night in the capital of Louis XIII. as if we were at home in Lorraine.’

‘I am no Italian,’ said I, pressing my blade against his; ‘I am a Scottish gentleman, and shall make you pay dearly for this fanfaronade.’

‘Peste!’ said he, dropping his point for a moment; ‘a Garde de Manche?’

‘No.’

‘Pardieu, chevalier,’ exclaimed, the other, who seemed bent on having mischief, ‘tis only a Scottish Calvinist, who on his way to the devil, has visited our good city of Paris.

‘Vive le fils d’Harlette!

‘Then, have at you, monsieur!’

In a moment both our swords were engaged to the hilt; while he, whose title of monseigneur led me to infer that his rank was high, remained with his rapier drawn to see fair play—but he was so tipsy that he could scarcely stand.

Our duel was silent, desperate, and quiet on my part; for I was highly exasperated by the effrontery and daring with which these two wild ruffs, regardless of all consequences, had fastened a quarrel upon me; and I was resolved to punish them both severely; but my antagonist continued to talk and sing while making all his lunges, and as his back was turned to a dim oil lamp that swung behind him, he had considerably the advantage of me, and took care to retain it; yet I had no fear, for the famous Count de Forgatz was not a better swordsman than I.

After all I had undergone in my own country—and this *all*, the reader shall know ere long—the reflection flashed upon my mind, that Fate would indeed deal hardly with me, if I should be slain, nameless and unknown, in a street brawl, and left dead among the offal of Paris, to be carried away to the Morgue by porters or the watch in the morning. The very thought gave new fury to my heart, and fresh nerve to my arm! The sword of the French chevalier was longer and heavier than mine; but thanks to my Scottish education I was no way his inferior in this desperate game; my slender blade, twisted and span round his like a serpent; and after an engagement of three minutes, every thrust he made was successfully parried.

'Tête Dieu! I came too late to the parry there,' said he, as my point tore up the lace on the breast of his crimson velvet pourpoint, and while the blades clashed and rasped on each other, striking fire in the dark, he sang the last verse of his song

Falaise dans sa vielle tour
 Vit entrer la fillette,
 Et c'est là que le Dieu d'amour
 Finit l'histoerette;
 Anglais, honorez ces amans!
 Vive le fils d'Harlette!
 Normands,
Vive le fils d'Harlette!

Diable! take care, monsieur, or I am through you—*my*

sword is like a spit in the king's kitchen. Peste ! take time, fellow—Death himself could not be more impatient than you. A devil of a thrust that—our little flash in the pan is really becoming quite serious !

I pressed so close upon him, that once the bowl-hilts of our swords touched and rung ; but at a moment, when this gay chevalier, who treated my fencing with such coolness and contempt, slipped his left foot, and consequently raised his guard a little, I lunged furiously within, and drove my sword nearly to the cross guard through his ribs on the right side.

Poor wretch ! he uttered a sound something between a sob and a cry, while instinctively I drew back my blade to parry the return his hand could never give me now. His eyes glared and closed, the sword dropped from his fingers, and, deluged in blood, he sunk upon the causeway.

I found myself face to face with a dying man, and this cooled us all.

‘ Monsieur,’ said his companion, hurriedly, ‘ we have been to blame ; you are a stranger, fly !’

‘ Whither ?’ I asked, wildly ; ‘ I have already lost my way.’

‘ Morbleu ! you will find it soon enough ; to the Bastille, if the watch overtake you !’

This dreadful word *Bastille* gave me fresh resolution.

‘ Away, away, monsieur !’ gasped the wounded man, half choked in his blood ; ‘ take this ring—’ he struggled to get it off his finger ; ‘ oh, Monseigneur le Prince, give him this—my ring ; the lieutenant of the watch is my friend—away ! I have known a man branded with the fleur de lys, and broke alive on the wheel, for less than this.’

‘ If taken, show the ring of the chevalier to the lieutenant, and you will be allowed to pass.’

‘ But we must see each other again—’

‘ Trust to heaven for that,’ gasped the wounded man, adding generously, ‘ away ! I hear footsteps—’tis the watch !’

‘Forgive me, Chevalier,’ said I, trent with emotion, ‘but this quarrel was not of my seeking.’

‘From my soul I forgive you, but begone.’

‘Farewell!’

And with this word I turned and fled, just as a mounted patrol of the watch turned the corner of the Rue de la Mortellerie, and entered the Place de la Grève.

CHAPTER III.

THE CHATEAU.

‘In the affairs of every one,’ says a French writer, ‘there is a moment which decides upon his future. It is almost always chance, which takes a man as the wind does a leaf, and throws him into some new and unknown path, where, once entered, he is obliged to obey a superior force, and where, while believing himself free, he is but *the slave of circumstances, and the plaything of events.*’

I have been much struck by the force and truth of this passage, which seems to bear directly upon my own career in life:—to resume.

A long, dark, and narrow street, lighted by only two lanterns that flickered like glow-worms at each end of it, led me towards the Rue St. Antoine; and heedless of everything but the desire to leave Paris, I hurried along the deserted thoroughfares, with a swimming head and a sickened heart.

The streets of Paris, like those of London, were then in a deplorable condition; unpaved, and encumbered by heaps of rubbish and cinders, the daily débris of the household, that festered in the stagnant gutters and watercourses, with the blood of the slaughter-booths, all matted and plastered by the feet of passengers, the hoofs of horses, and the wheels of waggons, carriages, and fiacres. Many of the tortuous and

intricate alleys were literally dunghills. In the deep central gutters the swine revelled, and contested with kites and crows, dogs and beggars, for the offal of Paris. A French prince of the royal blood was killed in the city by a privileged pig of St. Anthony running between the legs of his horse; the splendid rider was brought prone into the mud with a broken neck. Moreover, in this good city every variety of slops and utensils were emptied nightly over the windows, with the same warning cry that was used in Scottish towns, and which never failed to strike the belated with alarm—*Gardez l'eau!*

I dashed on, my sword still unsheathed, leaping the chains at the ends of the greater thoroughfares; on past the Porte St. Antoine, unseen by the watch, unchallenged by the sentinels, and leaving the town behind me, hurried along a country road, which afterwards proved to be the way to Vincennes. At length the fields, the trees, and solitude were around me, and I paused to draw breath, and look back to where the vastness of Paris, like a wilderness of stone, lay buried in sleep, and overtopped by the huge dark towers of Notre Dame.

Another black and frowning mass rose above the roofs and spires: it resembled the keep of a castle. I remembered the Bastille, that place of dreadful memories; and when recalling the rank of those I had so recently encountered, for one had been termed *chevalier*, and the other *monseigneur*, I felt more than one retrospective pang of anxiety or panic, and while endeavouring to imagine in what part of yonder wilderness my antagonist was lying, I turned my back upon it, and, with a glow of sad and fierce satisfaction, inhaled the free, pure breeze that came over the fallow fields. The sound of hoofs made me pause, listen eagerly, and then hurriedly to pierce a hedge and leave the road; for a mounted party, to my consternation too evidently the night patrol bent in pursuit of me, galloped along the highway. I had the ring of the discomfited chevalier, but I cared not to test its virtue on the lieutenant of police.

After wandering for nearly an hour in a park or lawn, the smooth and grassy level of which was broken at intervals by thickets of trees and shrubbery, I found myself close to a large and handsome château. Its turreted façade cut the sky, and its numerous vanes of gilt copper were creaking in the wind, as I ascended the paved and balustraded terrace, which formed a broad plateau around the walls. The edifice formed three sides of a quadrangle; the centre was evidently appropriated to the principal inmates; but the whole was covered by rich carving, coats of arms, florid cornices and gablets. The wings were apparently the residence of servants, with the stables and offices. On the highest slate-roofed turret creaked a large swallow-tailed vane—in fact, a girouette, which, of old, was permitted only to those of the ancient French noblesse who had been foremost in entering a breach, or planting his pennon on a hostile rampart—hence the modern vane.

This stately château was nearly all sunk in gloom; one or two lights amid its sombre masses alone pierced the darkness; and, fearing to be taken for a robber, and perhaps fired on by the arquebuse of some pot-valiant butler or officious lacquey, I stood upon the paved terrace, irresolute whether to *strike* the bell at the porter's lodge, or retire altogether; but an end was put to my indecision, when a curtain was suddenly withdrawn at one of the large windows on the ground-floor; a flood of light streamed across the terrace and lawn, and the figure of a handsome woman, richly dressed, was seen for a moment, as she peered inquiringly into the darkness without.

As she withdrew and the curtain fell from her hand, but without completely closing, I approached softly and peeped in, for in my present desperate emergency I was resolved to trust rather to the advice and protection of a woman than of a man.

The apartment was small, and richly decorated in the florid French taste: I took in the whole scene at a glance. The walls were hung with the finest specimen of Gobelin tapestry,

representing the judgment of Solomon. The chairs were cushioned with pale-blue satin, fringed with silver, and, like the tables, they were richly gilt. On a buhl table stood a gorgeous silver lamp, the soft light of which fell on the figures of two ladies. One was tall, high-bosomed, and round-armed —full and ample every way, even to voluptuousness. She seemed to be about thirty-five years of age, and had magnificent eyes, with a bewitching droop in their long lashes, and an irresistible smile over all her face. Her complexion was brilliant, and her manner was full of vivacity. She wore a green silk dress, starred with gold ; and carried in her jewelled hand a large fan of painted feathers. Her fingers, her chesnut hair, her bosom and taper arms were sparkling with diamonds ; and by the richness of her costume, and the languid air that pervaded her manner, I supposed that she had just returned from some brilliant Parisian fête.

Her companion was a fair young girl with white shoulders, and a complexion of excessive delicacy ; soft and pale, but it seemed the pallor of high birth and gentle breeding, rather than want of health. Her hair, which hung about her in great volume, was of the lightest auburn ; thus her ringlets shone like clusters of gold in the lamplight ; her eyes were a deep blue or violet colour, and their brows and lashes a dark-brown tint. Her attire was singularly plain ; in one hand she carried a thick serge mantle ; in the other a black velvet mask.

She was excited apparently, for she spoke in low and hurried tones, while delivering certain letters and papers to the taller lady, who might have passed for her aunt or elder sister ; yet there was no resemblance in face or manner between them.

Unwilling to play the eavesdropper even for a moment, I tapped gently on the window.

The younger lady uttered a faint cry of alarm, and assumed her mask ; but the elder thrust all the papers into her ample bosom, and coming resolutely forward, threw back the rich

arras, and her eyes flashed with evident anger, astonishment, and perhaps alarm, when they met my figure immediately outside the window ; but, with my broad beaver in my left hand, and my right pressed upon my heart, I bowed with the utmost respect, and muttered a few words, I know not what, by way of apology for my untimely appearance there.

Reassured by my aspect or my respectful bearing, she quickly opened the folding sash of the window, and from the apartment and her presence a sense of perfume floated round me.

‘Who are you, monsieur, and what seek you here?’ she asked in a charming voice.

‘Alas, madame !’ said I, feeling that sad sinking of a proud heart, which all but prostrates every energy, for never until then had my utter friendlessness so oppressed me ; ‘I am an unfortunate gentleman,—a stranger who has lost his way, and knows not in which direction to turn.’

‘This is the Château d’Amboise ; the way to Paris lies yonder,—straight across the lawn you will find the high-road, and then pursue it to your left.’

‘Thanks, madame—

‘I have the honour to wish you a good night, monsieur.’

‘Stay, madame, and pardon me—’ I paused and cast down my eyes.

‘Speak—what would you say ?’

‘Within this hour I have had to fly from Paris, pursued by the watch.’

‘Ah—indeed !’ she said, suspiciously.

‘Having become involved in a brawl while protecting a fugitive female from two drunken gallants who were pursuing her, I was roughly set upon, and had the misfortune to—to—

‘To—what, monsieur ?’

‘Run one through the body.’

‘And this was in the Place de la Grève, where the great pillory stands?’ said the lady.

' It was close to the bridge of the Seine.'

' Ah ! the Pont de Notre Dame ?'

' Yes, madame.'

' Mon Dieu ! how strange ! Nicola, behold your preserver Poor boy—for you are but a boy—how pale you look ! Step in—quick my friend—tell me all this affair over again ; and Nicola, hand him some wine ; when I took you into my coach at the Pont de Notre Dame, how little we thought that one of your pursuers was being run through the body ; but it served him right, the insolent—quite right !'

I entered by the window and the curtains were closed behind ; and in the younger lady, who had so hastily assumed her disguise, and who tremblingly handed to me a glass of wine, I recognised my pretty friend, the mask of the Place de la Grève ; and I remarked that the hand which gave me the glass, was small, white, and delicate as a lily leaf.

' You shall remain here until pursuit is over,' said the lady, approaching a hand-bell ; but suddenly she paused ; her brow clouded and her eyes sparkled. ' Oh, monsieur, if all this story be but the trick of a gallant, who may have followed us—'

' Madame !' I exclaimed, and drew myself up angrily.

' Enough, monsieur—forgive me ; 'twas but the thought of a moment, and this Paris of ours is so full of tricks and tricksters. My house is yours—be assured, sir, it is large enough for us both.'

' May I ask to whom I have the honour of being indebted ?'

She gave me one of her beautiful but inexplicable smiles, as she replied,

' I am Madame Clara d'Ische.'

' The Countess d'Amboise ?'

' Yes.'

' Oh, madame !' I exclaimed ; ' this is a happy fatality ! it is on you, and you only, that all my hopes in France depend.'

' On me ?' she said, while her fine eyes dilated with asto-

nishment, and I drew from my secret pocket the letter of the Duke of Lennox.

'Exiled from my own country, madame, for reasons which I can easily explain, I am most anxious to obtain military employment in one of the Scottish regiments of King Louis; and his Grace the Duke of Lennox favoured me with this letter of recommendation to you, saying that in Paris you were all powerful, and that Paris is France.'

She held out her hand, and as the trimmings of rich lace fell back to her elbow, she displayed an arm of dazzling whiteness, as with a proud and gratified smile she received and opened the letter of the duke. Its tenor and conception were no doubt complimentary and gallant; and perhaps it referred to old remembered days and passages of love between them in other times; for a half-repressed sigh escaped her; her fine eyelids drooped; a half blush flitted across her cheek with a soft smile of pleasure. Folding it hastily, she placed it in her bosom, and bending her bright hazel eyes upon me, said,

'Believe, monsieur, that all my little interest is wholly at your service.'

'Ah, Madame la Comtesse, how shall I thank you!'

'You will soon learn, monsieur,' and the eyelids drooped again to veil a cunning smile.

'The Duke informed me that you had but to express a wish, and his majesty King Louis would grant it—even were it to go to war with the empire.'

'His Grace of Lennox is almost right. Here at our French court the ladies guide the men, and have all their several departments in the science of government and intrigue.'

'So I have heard, madame.'

'Thus, the tender and pious Mademoiselle de Stujon has charge of Monseigneur le Duc d'Orleans; Madame de Chatillon, lively, tender, and black-eyed, has especial dominion over the Duc de Nemours and the great Prince of Condé; Mademoiselle de Chevreuse commands the amorous little

Coadjutor Bishop of Paris ; the tall, ample, fair, and dazzling Montbazon, with her snow-white shoulders, and bosom like a Juno, looks after the Duc de Beaufort ; Madame de Longoville, with her saucy blue eyes, has charge of the Duc de Rochefoucault and le Marquis de Gordon, Captain of the Scottish guard ; while that brilliant little blonde, the Duchesse de Bouillon, has a more terrible task than all assigned her—what is it, dear Nicola ?'

‘She actually looks after her own husband.’

‘But, madame,’ said I, ‘in this catalogue of political beauties you forget yourself. You govern—’

‘The King !’ she replied with a triumphant smile that made her seem irresistibly beautiful ; but the reply was whispered in my ear *so closely* that I started with confusion.

‘So said the Duke of Lennox, adding, “she has but to smile, and the commander of the Scots will give you a pair of colours at once.”’

‘There M. le Duc de Lennox overrated my influence, for old M. de la Ferte Imbault, who has just been appointed Colonel-General des Ecossais, is a venerable military bear, who served under Henri Champignon and the Marshal de Tavannes, and is so old that ’tis said he really remembers the last tournament in the Place de Carrousel ; so on him my smiles would be lavished in vain. Yet, take courage—I am your friend, and you have this night done me a greater service than you are aware of. Take some more wine—you still look pale, said she, passing her soft warm hand caressingly over my cheek and forehead ; ‘but now tell me—and pray excuse the question—have you ever—’

‘What, madame ?’

‘Been in love ?’

The blood mounted to my temples as I almost quailed under the keen eye of the beautiful questioner, and felt my heart beat strongly—almost wildly, though she was my senior by at least fifteen years.

‘ In love—no, madame ; but why that question ? ’

‘ Because to be successful now, in France, you must **study** the art, or rather theory of love as assiduously as that of **war**. You must learn to laugh at **everything**—to blush at nothing, and to fight with every man who affronts you ; but pardon me, I am forgetting the proverb—*fier comme un Ecossais !* Among us in Paris, an assignation and a campaign are nearly of equal importance ; and love sheds its divine halo over everything. As Cervantes says, a soldier without a mistress is like a ship without a rudder, or a pilot without his compass. Thus M. de Chatillon is so enamoured of the lovely Mademoiselle le Guerchi that he wears one of her silk garters round his right arm in battle ; and should you fall in love with *me*, I will give you one of *mine*. ’

‘ Oh, madame ! ’ I murmured, overpowered by the beauty of the speaker and perplexed by the strange morality she displayed—a code which I now heard for the first time.

‘ And Monseigneur le Duc de Bellegarde, Peer and Marshal of France, the declared lover of the Queen Regent, before taking leave of her Majesty, to command the army on the frontiers, prayed, that as a parting favour she would lay her beautiful hand but once on the hilt of his sword. Thus it is, we still foster the spirit of gallantry which Anne of Austria brought among us from old Castille and the cavaliers of Madrid. But while I am running on in this way, monsieur my friend, I am quite forgetting that the night has passed, that the morning draws on apace, and that, as you have never been in love, it could not be an affair of the heart which made you leave your country so young. What was it then ? ’

‘ An affair of the dagger, madame,’ said I, with a bitter sigh.

‘ Drink again, refresh yourself, and collect your thoughts before you speak.’

And while doing so, I will here insert a little paragraph for my reader’s information.

His Majesty, Louis XIII., though not very much of a lover, sometimes *did* take a liking to the fair sex. His regard for Mademoiselle de la Fayette, a maid of honour to his queen, was notoriously known, but he was a man at times religious, weak, bigoted, scrupulous by fits, and not over-voluptuous by nature; hence, save for the honour his royal regard was supposed to confer, and the magnificent gifts it drew forth, his gallantries were neither dangerous nor much in request. His confessor, the Jesuit Coussin, permitted his mild liaison for the charming Fayette to favour the queen-mother's rival, and mademoiselle being in the interest of the minister, Cardinal Richelieu, smiled on the vapid love and clumsy gallantries of the most Christian king. But the tide of politics turned; and by desire of the Cardinal, and by the exordiums of Father Leslie, a Scot, who succeeded Coussin as keeper of the royal conscience, the beautiful Fayette was immured in a convent. Then his Majesty of France fell in love with Clara d'Ische, a lady of Lorraine, whom he created Countess d'Amboise; and on her, now, were the eagle eyes of Richelieu turned, to discover by what means she might be made subservient to himself or be crushed for ever. Thus, thanks to the secret agency of his familiar, Father Joseph d'Tremblay, of terrible memory, nearly every servant in her château was the spy of the Cardinal Prime-minister, who, with what truth I say not, was at that moment accounted the lover of Anne of Austria and of Marion de l'Orme.

CHAPTER IV.

THE BOND OF MANRENT.

MADAME, who never tired of prattling, spoke again :

‘The letter of my dear old friend the Duke—by-the-by, does he still curl his mustachios up to his ears?—says that your father was ’

‘Blane of that ilk and of Blanerne, madame, in the Stewartry of Kirkcudbright, Bailie of Tungland Abbey, and Captain of Carlaveroc for John Earl of Nithsdale.’

‘Ma foi! he has as many guttural titles as a Spanish grandee of the first class; but pray tell me, what does *that ilk* mean?’

‘In the Scottish language it denotes, madame, that the holder has either given his name to the territory he possesses, or has taken his name from it; moreover, that he is the head of his surname. Our old baronial houses alone bear it, for it is a custom dating from the days of king Malcolm III., and consequently is more than six hundred years old. My father’s office of captainrie under the Earl of Nithsdale was, in some measure, the cause of all our misfortunes and of my exile.’

‘Proceed, pray, for I am all attention.’

‘He was an old adherent of the house of Nithsdale, and with the present Earl, the Lord Torthorwald, and six other gentlemen of the surnames of Maxwell, Douglas, and Blane, signed, about six years ago, a *Bond of Manrent*—’

‘Excuse me, M. Blane—but I do not understand.’

‘It means a bond of friendship and alliance, to the effect that they bound themselves to stand by each other, in peace and in war, in weal and woe, with all the might of their estates, castles, and retainers, in arms against all men; the cause of each to be the cause of all; and to this deed, which is now in the charter-room of Carlaveroc, they swore by their honours and souls, affixing thereto their signatures and seals.’

‘This seemed somewhat like a league against the king.’

‘Nay, madame, such bonds have been common in Scotland for ages, and have arisen from the wish to create a feudal relation between lords and vassals who have no affinity by tenure, and to strengthen the weak against the strong. Such leagues are certainly contrary to the laws of the land, yet they exist. But a time came to test the strength of my father’s bond with the Earl of Nithsdale. King Charles being madly

devoted to his father's rash project of assimilating the kirk of Scotland, in point of ceremony and in government, to the Church of England, with regular gradations of titled clergy, lately resolved, by an Act of Revocation, to resume and appropriate to the crown all the tithes and benefices which the barons and other laymen had seized during the plunder of temporalities at the Reformation; and from these he proposed to endow the intended Scottish episcopal bishoprics, deaneries, rectories, and so forth. The rage of our fiery barons was great, and their resolution was not less than their rage. There were many whose whole estates and possessions had been church property, and thus it was with us, for most of my father's barony of Blanerne had in ancient times been a fief of the Abbots of Tungland, and was of course comprehended in this new and most obnoxious resumption, though it had been a free gift to his grandfather by the Regent Lennox, and the Lords of the Congregation, for his valour at the great siege of Leith, where he routed and slew the Colonel-General of the Italian infantry.

'The intended Revocation was to be announced to the Convention of Estates by the king's representative in Scotland, the Lord High Commissioner, who was, unhappily for us, the Earl of Nithsdale; but certain of the Scottish lords and barons were determined to kill him before the assembled Parliament, and then appeal to arms rather than yield to a measure so impoverishing and obnoxious; and despite the *Bond of Manrent*, friendship, and alliance, which bound him with sword and service, soul and body to the Earl of Nithsdale, and to whatever cause he espoused, my father, Sir Arthur Blane, joined the resisting barons in their deadly purpose, and defied the Maxwells, at all times a desperate and a turbulent race. My father was wroth alike with the government of the kirk and kingdom under Nithsdale, and the suspicion of the Convention of Estates was first brought upon him thus:—Having inscribed above the door of his tower a legend which

seemed to reflect upon the Presbyterian Kirk, he was imprisoned for a month in the castle of Lochmaben, because he did not know Latin.'

' Ma foi ! a droll reason.'

' It is not to be wondered at when we all know that a few years ago Robert Earl of Orkney lost his head for the same heinous crime. My father was released, but the affront rankled in his mind. It was resolved to poniard the Lord High Commissioner on the throne, at the moment when the last word of the royal letter was read ; and the contention for this desperate office — for who should *Bell-the-Cat* — was so keen, that lots were cast, and ere long the lots were reduced to two — my father, Sir Arthur Blane of Blanerne, and Sir Robert Douglas of Spot, Viscount of Belhaven, an aged peer who was stone blind, and who, in his youth, had been master of the horse to the Duke of Rothsay, a gentleman of the bedchamber to James VI., and member of the Privy Council. To him only would my father yield place, for in other years they had been old comrades and served together in France.

' So the terrible and eventful day came at last ; the Parliament met at Edinburgh with unusual grandeur and gloom ; four hundred representatives of the Scottish people were there, with darkened brows, with angry hearts and sharp swords by their sides. The commissioner sat upon the throne ; before him lay the crown, the sword of state, the sceptre and all the royal insignia ; but behind stood the blind old Viscount of Belhaven holding his velvet robes by the left hand on pretence that, being aged and infirm, he wished to be near the Lord Nithsdale. His other hand was concealed in his bosom, and firmly grasped a dagger. Beside him stood my stern father, who, that he might not be unemployed, had taken upon him the task of slaying the Viscount Ayr, whom the king had created Earl of Dumfries, and who was a warm adherent of the intemperate Revocation .

‘Mon Dieu !’ exclaimed Madame d’ Amboise ; ‘I never heard of all this stabbing and assassination !’

‘Because, madame, the proposed tragedy went no further than this terrible tableau ; for the Earl of Nithsdale had learned something of what was awaiting him and other friends of our alien king ; and after proceeding with the usual business of the parliament, he closed it abruptly, without producing the letter of revocation which would have plunged all Scotland into civil war ; and after despatching messengers into Nithsdale, he returned—yea almost fled—to the court at London.

‘What meant the messengers ?’

‘You shall hear,’ said I, making a violent effort to control the rage and grief that swelled in my breast ; ‘within a week after the closing of parliament my poor father was found dead on the verge of Lochar-moss—pierced by three balls from an arquebuse ; and on that night our tower of Blanerne was burned to the ground, and all the country around it made desolate by six hundred mosstroopers of the Maxwell clan. Breaking through them sword in hand, after seeing my only living relative, a boy-brother about six years old, perish in the flames, I reached Edinburgh to lay my complaints before the authorities, but found them all the creatures of the king—a king Scottish by birth and blood, but English by breeding, residence, and sympathy ! Oh cursed be the hour when Scotland gave a king unto her enemies ! I appealed to the Secretary of State, but he was my good Lord Nithsdale’s fast friend and near kinsman, so he smiled in my face. I appealed to the Lord Advocate ; he was my Lord Dumfries’ cousin, and bade me complain to the king in London. Being a placeman and a coward, he taunted my murdered father’s memory ; so I smote him on the mouth with my sword-hilt—yea, smote him down as I would have done a dog, and had again to fly. Destruction and pursuit dogged me close ; but aided by the kind old Duke of Lennox, a kinsman of my mother, I obtained the letter which you hold and also shipping to Havre. There

I landed safely, and found lodgings with a countryman of my own, an honest vintner, who met me wandering sadly and irresolutely from street to street. He accosted me, as Scotsmen always greet each other in a foreign land, for his heart warned to the St. Andrew's cross in my bonnet—and he was more than kind to me. I then took the public messenger to Paris, agreeing for fifteen francs to have a horse, lodgings, and food on the way; but I had to give the conductor a piece of thirteen sols. I reached Paris only last night, when an honest fellow, who proved to be an Englishman and a Protestant, guided me to an hotel, the Golden Fleur-de-lys in the Rue d'Ecosse. I spent the next day in wandering about the palace and gardens of the Luxembourg and the royal library, seeing the books of miniatures done by Monsieur Robert, the garden of the Tuilleries, and the church of Notre Dame, the two massy towers, the antiquity and gloom of which charmed and soothed me; but alas, madame! I felt lonely and sad amid the roar and bustle of this vast and crowded city; I was ready to weep—yea, to weep like a child, when I thought of my ruined fortunes, my blighted family, and my father's ancient tower that looked down upon the Dee, and my native hills and heather braes that were far, far away!

‘And did you travel comfortably to Paris?’

‘With more frugality than comfort, madame, remembering that he who sleeps without supper awakes without debt.’

‘My poor boy! you will soon learn that two things are most necessary in this good and pious city of Paris—a drawn sword and a golden wand. But tell me,’ she added, with a coquettish smile, and while dropping her voice and her eyelashes together, ‘are you capable of feeling a deep love?’

‘Love?’ I reiterated a second time, while my heart vibrated strongly, and I perceived the fair mask beside us, who had listened to all this in silence, turn away with a gesture of ineffable disdain.

' Well, well, M. Blane, I will talk to you of this another time,' said the countess, who detected this secret displeasure in her friend or companion ; ' a deep love is not necessary, if you are only adequate to a little pretty wickedness, or amiable weakness, it is quite enough here—for we do not love long in these days of ours. Believe me that his Grace of Lennox shall be obeyed, and that I will leave nothing undone to find you a suitable position in France.'

' Oh madame, a thousand thanks !' I exclaimed, remembering, with something of remorse, that I had once felt considerable disdain for the character of the patroness to whom my ducal kinsman had assigned me.

' What say you to join the Duke of Lorraine ?' she asked abruptly.

' Lorraine, madame ?' I stammered.

' Yes.'

' He is said to be in league with the German emperor against the King of France,' said the masked lady hurriedly.

' Well, mademoiselle—and what then ?'

' Ah, madame la Comtesse, do not trepan the poor youth into a service of which he is ignorant, or into a hazardous game like that now played by France and Lorraine.'

' As you please,' replied the Countess pettishly. ' Mademoiselle Marie Louise of Lorraine, the duke's only daughter and favourite child, is said to be now in Paris, and to have won over more than twenty colonels of the French army to her father's cause.'

' Pardon me, madame,' said I, ' but remember that a Scottish subject cannot serve with honour against a king of France.'

' Then your wishes—'

' Are military service under King Louis. My father served as a lieutenant in the Gensdarmes Ecossais for ten years, and fought at the siege of Rochelle, where the Huguenots insisted on holding their assembly ; at the storming of the castle of

Saulx, and the blockade of Caumont. I should like a commission in the same force.'

' May I ask what money you have?'

' Only ten louis d'ors.'

She gave me a beautiful smile, and said,

' My dear child, you do not know that a captaincy in the Scottish gendarmerie or cuirassiers costs one hundred and eighty thousand livres, being forty-five thousand more than a troop in any other regiment of horse, even the gendarmerie of Bourguignon or Flanders; a cornetey in the Scottish troop costs sixty-two thousand livres. You must moderate your ambition, and be contented with the post of a simple cuirassier, for in the ranks of the Scottish guard, horse and foot, are none but the noblest and best blood of your own country; thus your rank and pay as a Scottish cuirassier will enable you to ruffle it in Paris with any gallant or chevalier about court. I shall send for the captain, or write to the colonel-general of the Scots in the morning, when our wishes shall be complied with—provided there be a *vacancy*.

' Madame,' I exclaimed, overcome by the sweetness and decision of her manner, as much as by its kindness and the brilliance of her beauty, 'the devotion of my life shall be yours.'

I drew from my finger the only jewel I possessed—the ring obtained that night so strangely and disastrously in the Place de la Grève; and as it seemed to be a valuable diamond, I was about to place it on her finger, when the sound of a carriage driven furiously up the avenue, a slamming of doors, the tramp of feet and voices of men who seemed somewhat excited, gradually approached the apartment in which we were seated. The Countess grew very pale.

' Can this be the King?' she exclaimed.

' Oh, no,' said her attendant, who trembled excessively; 'there are no torches and no musketeers; 'tis not his Majesty.'

'Away, my friend,' said the Countess, clasping her hands and while the masked lady retired in evident alarm, I laid hand on my sword.

'Can my brother have come here at this untimous hour?' muttered the Countess, as a servant entered with a hurried and disordered air.

'Ah, Madame la Comtesse——'

'Mon Dieu! what is the matter? Speak, Antoine—speak!'

'Your brother, madame—M. le Chevalier d'Ische—has this moment been brought hither in a fiacre almost dead, having fought with a brigand on the Quai de la Grève, and been run through the body!'

'My brother!' exclaimed Madame d'Amboise, growing pale as a lily, and turning her eyes wildly upon me; and at that moment, when I saw a wounded man borne by four servants past an opening in the parted arras, I felt as if the earth was yawning beneath my feet.

So ended my first night in the city of Paris!

CHAPTER V

THE COUNTESS'S BOUDOIR.

I WAS hastily conducted to a chamber by Antoine, the servant, who had brought this alarming intelligence, and who marched before me, bearing two tall candles of pink wax, bowing to his knees at every second step. I inquired if the chevalier who had just been brought hither was dangerously wounded. Antoine replied, that he was speechless, pale, and pierced near the right lung; but a skilful surgeon had announced that he believed the patient would be out of danger in a day or two.

This was some comfort, and when the valet left me,

I threw off my clothes ; but frequently pausing during the process of dressing, I looked around me with a vague misbelief of my own identity ; nor did the pallor of my face and the wild expression of my eyes, as I surveyed myself in a huge mirror that was bordered by an old Flemish marqueterie frame mounted with ormolu, quite reassure me that I was not myself, but somebody else.

Opposite hung a quaint picture of a tall dame, with one of those steeple-like coifs worn by Parisian ladies in the days of the unhappy dauphiness Margaret of Scotland, and Isabella of Bavaria.

I was really in the house of the king's powerful mistress—the famous Countess d'Amboise—she to whom my carefully-treasured letter had been addressed—she who held in her fair, plump hands even more than the wary and subtle Richelieu the balance of peace and war between France and the empire ; and she who had promised to me her protection, and more than protection, her kindest favour ; but, while her guest, I knew myself to be perhaps the destroyer of a brother to whom she was evidently sincerely attached ! I threw myself into the bed of soft down, and under its canopy of plumes and gilding strove to sleep, to forget that I was weary, and that daybreak was almost at hand ; but an hour or more elapsed before the high-backed marqueterie chairs of Utrecht velvet, or the huge tapestry on the walls faded away, as the night lamp burned dim, and assuredly the misshapen figures on the arras were ghastly enough ! They represented Louis XI., surrounded by his principal soldiers, placing around the neck of Launay de Morville the collar of his own military order, as the reward of valour and prowess in the field ; and the whole group in their fleur-de-lis'd surcoats vibrated slowly and with a lifelike motion in the cold wind which found entrance by a hundred crannies ; for the chateau was old, having been built by Jacques d'Amboise, abbot of Cugny, in 1490. It had been enlarged and remodelled by the Duc de Sully, who was Grand

Master of the king's artillery in 1599, and who decorated the walls in the most florid style of French architecture. Here, too, dwelt Louis de Clermont de Bussy d'Amboise, so famous for his accomplishments and valour, and who, at an assignation with the beautiful Madame de Montresor, was most unpleasantly slain by her husband and his valets. Latterly it had been a residence of the princely house of Guise in Lorraine, and on being sold by them, was bought by the king, and by him bestowed with a patent of nobility upon Clara d'Ische. Since then, as a protection against robbers and lovers, it was usually protected by twenty of the grey musketeers ; but, fortunately for me, on this night the usual guard had been withdrawn, as the French troops were all moving towards Lorraine.

The next morning was somewhat advanced, when the same attendant, Antoine, who appeared to be greatly trusted by the countess, came to dress me, and brought me a cup of hot coffee, which, for breakfast, I preferred to the poor thin wine and cold sliced meat usually taken by the Parisians.

I inquired for the wounded chevalier.

' He had been pronounced out of danger by an eminent physician—in fact, his Majesty's own medical attendant, who had come from the Louvre to visit him. Madame the Countess was quite radiant with joy, as she dearly loved her brother the wild chevalier, and was now awaiting me in her boudoir.'

As I hastily swallowed my hot coffee from a silver cup and salver, the figure of this remarkable woman seemed to rise before me in fancy, with her dark voluptuous eyes, half veiled by their long and drooping silky lashes, her delicate lips so strangely red and full ; her complexion of surpassing brilliance ; her luxuriant hair, her large, full, and stately form, with hands and feet which, for one of her size, were wonderfully and beautifully small.

And then her smile, unequalled in pretty roguery and witchery !

I finished my coffee and sighed, I knew not why.

'Let me be wary,' thought I, 'or I shall really end by loving this woman.'

Antoine, with considerable circumspection, conducted me towards her boudoir or dressing-room, and raising a curtain, ushered me at once and unannounced into her presence. This little apartment was charming. It was nearly circular, being in a tower of the chateau, and from a window I could see the smoke of Paris and the two dark towers of Notre Dame in the distance. The walls were hung with pale-blue silk and silver; the furniture was all tapestry, and inlaid with mother-of-pearl. The tables were buhl; the carpet Persian, and the ceiling of blue, powdered with fleurs-de-lis, and painted in a florid style, to suit the French taste of the age. Nothing was spared in the way of expense, and it was averred that, for the fair inmate of the Chateau d'Amboise, the king, when his own funds failed, gave her more than one order for a thousand crowns of the sum, upon Messire Estein Janin, Seigneur de Bertiliac (treasurer to her Majesty *the Queen Consort*), whose office and residence were then in the Petit Bourbon.

A prie-dieu of oak, richly carved and covered with blue velvet embroidered with silver, stood in the centre of the apartment; on it lay a gilded missal; but both seemed as if they were much less in use than the mirror, the fan, and the curling-tongs on the toilette-table.

The Countess was seated before a mirror, with a fan of feathers in her hand. Her neck, arms, and perhaps rather too much of her large, fair bosom, were bare; but their whiteness was dazzling, and contrasted powerfully with the rich, deep tint of the soft and silky hair which fell in wavy masses over her shoulders, and which the expert hands of her tire-woman, a fair-haired creature, plainly dressed (in fact, my pretty mask of the last night), were wreathing, curling, and pinning up for the morning, previous to the visit of her per-ruquier.

A brilliant young noble clad in white velvet laced with

broad bars of gold, and having a diamond star sparkling on his left breast, was rising from his knee before her, as I entered, and for an instant I was conscious of a pang of jealousy. His complexion was dark ; his eyes keen ; his mouth beautifully cut, and his bearing was more than courtly—it was full of natural grace. The manner in which madame smiled and held out her hand, reassured me.

‘Welcome, M. Arthur,’ said she ; ‘this conjuncture is fortunate. M. le Marquis, allow me to present to you the young gentleman of whom we have just been speaking, and who is so warmly recommended to me by our friend Monseigneur le Duc de Lennox. M. Arthur, this gentleman is Monseigneur le Marquis de Gordon, Commander of the King’s Scottish Guard.’

I bowed low on hearing this, and all momentary emotion of pique gave way to the warmth of heart and comaderie with which Scotsmen always meet in a foreign land. The uniform of the marquis was white, as worn by the Scottish guard ‘in token of their unspotted fidelity and unstained honour.’ The diamond badge on his left breast was the star and cross of St. Andrew.

‘A friend of my mother’s house will always be welcome to me,’ said he, pressing my hand ; ‘for Henrietta Stewart made some mixture in the blood of Lennox and Huntly, allying them thus for ever. I have just heard your story from the Countess, and sympathize with you ; it is the old tale of local oppression and misgovernment, which will ever exist while the affairs of Scotland are committed to the care of needy lawyers and desperate placemen. But our king will find it perilous work to push his projects on the Scottish Church—of that anon. And so you wish to serve king Louis ?’

‘Yes, my Lord, in any military capacity that may become a gentleman. I have come to France to feed myself with the sword that fed my father before me ; for he, too, served in the Scottish Guard.’

'True—at the siege of Rochelle, at Caumont, and the capture of the Château de Sully; I have seen his name in our records, which bear honourable testimony to his bravery and worth.'

My heart swelled as the Marquis spoke. This handsome young noble was then in his thirtieth year. George, Lord Gordon, was styled marquis in France, being eldest son and heir-apparent of that Marquis of Huntly, who was Lieutenant of the North and commander of the insurgent Scottish Catholics who defeated the king's troops at the battle of Benrinnies.

'You have come at a fortunate time, sir. A war with Lorraine and the vaunting empire is now in every man's mouth; and I shall be glad to rally round king Louis every Scottish gentleman who may be useful to his cause. His ministers have already drawn up the plan of the campaign at the Louvre.'

'Indeed, ma foi! they have lost no time,' said the Countess, fanning herself vehemently.

'The frontiers of Lorraine and Alsace are all as well known to us as the Boulevards.'

The attendant of the Countess, who listened intently to all that passed, trembled very perceptibly at these words, and I could perceive that when the Countess glanced at her, she blushed to the temples.

'When we unfurl the oriflamme beyond the Rhine,' resumed the Marquis, clanking his steel spurs; 'ma foi! madame, but we shall make the kettle-drums boil, ere we run short of provant.'

A cloud crossed the beautiful face of Clara d'Amboise, but a smile chased it away.

'You forget, Marquis,' said she, 'that my mother was a lady of Lorraine; and to speak thus in my boudoir is merely to imitate Rodomont in the old romance. He was ever noisy and furious.'

The Marquis laughed, showing teeth as white as her own under a moustache as dark as her eyebrows; and he replied,—

‘ Pardon me, madame; but while in your presence in future, I shall be dumb on this subject, and every other you dislike—ay! dumb as—’

‘ The old bell of Burgundy,’ added Clara, laughing.

‘ Dumb as—what, madame?’

‘ The old bell which Clotaire II. carried away from the church of Notre Dame de Soissons, that stood in a pleasant valley by the banks of the Aisne. The successors of Clovis had made Soissons the seat of the empire, and as this old bell had been rung there on a thousand joyful occasions, it resented to such a degree its removal to Paris that it became dumb, and all the bell-ringers in the city could not elicit a sound from it. “Diable!” said king Clotaire, “this bell shows very bad taste, indeed, not to like our city of Paris.” So he sent it back to its old belfry; and the moment it found itself swinging securely in the ancient church of Notre Dame de Soissons it rung for seven hours, though untouched by mortal hand, and rung so loudly, too, as to be heard for seven miles down the valley of the Aisne.’

‘ A marvellous story—but scarcely suited to the days of Louis XIII.’

‘ Scarcely,’ added the Countess; and as the last chesnut braid of her magnificent hair was finished, she smiled gaily, and said to her attendant, ‘ You, my dear Nicola, may leave us now.’

The young girl made a low reverence, and with one of her disdainful smiles lurking in her charming eyes and mouth withdrew.

‘ Who is that girl?’ asked the Marquis, with considerable interest.

‘ My attendant,’ replied the Countess briefly.

‘ So I perceive, madame; is she a Parisian?’

‘No—a provincial.’

‘A provincial!’

‘Why this surprise, M. le Marquis?’

‘Her air is queenly. I never saw hands more divinely formed. Her birth must be above her station.’

‘Poor Nicola! she would be quite overwhelmed if she heard you; it would turn the poor girl’s head. But, Marquis, what of all this?’

‘Merely that she is even worthy to be your attendant,’ replied the politic captain of cuirassiers, as he kissed the hand of Clara.

‘You are very inquisitive, Marquis,’ said she, giving him a pat on the mouth with her feather fan; ‘I can assure you that she is only a poor girl consigned to my care—the daughter of a brave soldier who fought at the battle of Prague.’

‘When our present enemy, the Duke of Lorraine, commanded the Imperialists.’

‘Lorraine?’ murmured the Countess, with some confusion. ‘Yes—he did command there.’

‘And the cowardly Elector Guelph was defeated,’ added the Marquis, with a smile.

Madame d’Amboise gave him a furtive and uneasy glance, and then turned away. He gazed at her broadly in turn, with a smile which said plainly

‘Here is a *secret - a mystery*, which I cannot fathom.’

To change the subject, she said, in her playful way,

‘Were you ever really in love, Marquis?’

‘Your invariable query—yes, often,’ said Gordon, with a smile.

‘Indeed!’

‘But never with more than one woman at a time, madame; be assured that no one can love either a place, a woman, or aught else very long—a gay woman least of all, perhaps.’

‘Mon Dieu, Marquis, you become more and more French every day’

Gordon seemed to be still reflecting ; but he turned suddenly to me, and said,

‘ Mr. Blane, you are about six feet high I think.’

‘ I am only five feet ten inches, my Lord.’

‘ Bravo, you are just the height for a cuirassier of the guard, and shall be one. We require but two more to complete our hundred men-at-arms ; and I expect the Viscount Dundrennan and Sir Quentin Home daily from Scotland. You lodge—’

‘ With Maitre Pierre Omelette, at the Golden Fleur-de-lis.

‘ Ah—in the Rue d’Ecosse—the name attracted you to that street I presume.’

‘ Yes, Marquis.’

He smiled and patted me kindly on the shoulder.

‘ On riding back to the Louvre, I shall mention your name to Patrick Gordon our Marechal de Logis ; he will make all the necessary arrangements, after which, you will be a chevalier of the Scottish guard—farewell ; Madame la Comtesse adieu ; I hope to see you in Paris soon—we have not had much of the sun there lately.’

‘ Antoine, show out M. le Marquis,’ said she, giving Gordon her beautiful hand to kiss.

‘ Harkee Blane,’ he whispered, hurriedly as he passed us ; ‘ you are in a fair way to fortune ; but as a brother Scot and friend of my kinsman, I may warn you that you stand upon a precipice. *Already* she deems you one of her lovers, and as such will consider nothing too good for you for a time ; but BE WARY ! This chamber has occasionally led to the Bastille or to the more dreadful oubliettes of the Louvre. Farewell,’ he added, raising his voice ; ‘ the price of a horse is about six hundred crowns—but our Marechal de Logis will arrange everything for you. His apartments are at the Louvre, where he occupies the very shrine of love and beauty.’

‘ How, Marquis ?’ asked madame.

‘ He has the apartments of the beautiful Diana de Poictiers—the Duchess de Valentinois—whose spirit is said to haunt them.’

He retired, and left me standing midway between the arras and the chair of the Countess, irresolute, dreading what was to follow, yet unwilling to retire, and confounded by the mysterious tenor of his emphatic whisper, which at that moment I could scarcely analyse.

CHAPTER VI.

MADAME OPENS THE TRENCHES.

AND for a minute I continued to loiter between the doorway over which the gorgeous hangings of blue and silver had fallen, and the chair in which sat the beautiful friend of king Louis, playing coquettishly with her fan of feathers.

Happily for me, I lived in a time, and had before me a career, wherein every brave and handsome fellow could attain fortune and distinction, if he made the essay with a tolerably plausible tongue and a sharp rapier—the tongue for the ladies; the rapier for the foes of the standard he fought under. Yet, while conscious of this, I stood irresolutely, playing with the somewhat worn feather that drooped from my beaver hat—I was now entirely alone with this brilliant, self-possessed and confident favourite of the king.

‘ M Arthur, come hither,’ said she.

‘ I bowed.’

‘ Are you afraid that I shall eat you?’

I bowed again, and approached her chair.

‘ Have you nothing to say to me?’ she asked, turning her eyes full upon me.

‘ Ah, madame, what shall I say—how express myself!’

‘ You know how much I have to forgive you.’

‘ Do not speak of it, madame. Your brother’s narrow escape from a death at my hand, makes me tremble, when I think of it!’

‘ We will talk of that another time. Mademoiselle Nicola

has told me how much he and his debauched companion were to blame in molesting her.'

'True, Countess.'

'But they knew not who she was.'

'How, madame?'

'That she was *my* attendant and *not* a grisette,' said the Countess hastily. 'You have heard all that M. le Marquis has so kindly promised.'

'Oh yes, yes; more than I deserve, be assured.'

'What, are you so very wicked?'

'I trust not; yet I dare not express all I feel.'

'Am I then so terrible, or have you lost your tongue or your wits?' she asked with a waggish smile in her beautiful and half-closed eyes, as she leant back in the soft fauteuil.

'If Madame la Comtesse would—'

'Would what? speak out, boy; what are you thinking of?'

'Would pardon me, and excuse this confusion; for my soul is full of nothing but perplexity and admiration.'

Thus did the magic of this woman's beauty sway me against my reason, while I despised her position in my heart—a heart, moreover, that was not ungrateful.

She burst into a fit of merry laughter.

'Ma foi! my dear young friend, my Scottish provincial, you will make your fortune if you only continue as you have begun. A year in the Scottish guard will make you a more accomplished chevalier than the Marquis de Gordon himself! Really, without knowing it, you already act like a finished courtier.'

'I will study to improve this acting, and if madame will only permit to kiss her hand—'

'Tush, you silly boy, we are quite alone; your heart is full of gratitude, and you would only kiss my hand. What a timid little child it is!'

I kissed her on the cheek, and felt her soft perfumed hair sweep across my forehead, as, tremulous with delight and

emotion, I drew back, abashed by my own temerity, for I was but a boy ; and the warning of the kind Marquis tingled in my ears and in my heart.

‘ Poor child ; it looks quite frightened,’ said the Countess, smiling with the most provoking coolness.

‘ Madame, I have a king for my rival.’

‘ Take courage.’

‘ I have never lacked it.’

‘ He who loses heart, loses all, in a game of this kind at least. From this time we are allies, sworn friends ; when you visit me again, do not enter by the porte cochere, but by the secret door at the back of the château, *remember*.’

At that moment I perceived the fair form of the Countess’s golden-haired attendant, standing close by the arras which she had raised unbidden. She must have seen some portion of the last episode ; for her fine eyes were fixed, I thought, somewhat pityingly on me, and disdainfully on her mistress. This little provincial in her plain coif was delicately beautiful in face, hands, and form ; but eclipsed and overshadowed as she was by the brilliance and vivacity of the demonstrative Countess, I took but little notice of her then.

The moment she perceived Nicola, Madame d’Amboise coloured, and said to me rather sharply,

‘ Farewell, M. Arthur ; you must now keep your appointment in Paris with M. le Marquis and the Marechal de Logis of the Scottish Guard ; and remember that when all is arranged, I shall always be delighted to see you at the Château d’Amboise.’ She rang a handbell, and Antoine appeared.

‘ Tell the master of the stables to give this gentleman my bay horse Dagobert, which he will please to keep as a gift from me. Now go, M. Arthur ; and by the haste with which you return, I shall judge of your regard and your gratitude. Adieu.’ In ten minutes more I was on the road to Paris.

I may briefly mention, that before leaving the château, I was permitted, after innumerable difficulties, to visit my anta-

genist of the preceding night. I found him in bed, a handsome and soldier-like fellow, but pale with loss of blood, and, though out of danger, weak and severely wounded. I begged his forgiveness, which he readily accorded, and declined to accept back his ring; but requested my word of honour, that I would not mention his name to any one in Paris, as he was an officer of the Duke of Lorraine—the chevalier Raoul d'Ische, to have whom quietly disposed of, in one of the oubliettes of the Louvre or the stone cages of Louis XI., Cardinal Richelieu would readily pay a thousand crowns of the sun, for Raoul was the right arm of Lorraine.

'How, then, does the king's physician visit you?

'Because his place depends upon the smile or frown of my sister Clara. The reason of the Cardinal's enmity to me and to my master the Duke, on whose service I am secretly in Paris, another month will explain; but the Cardinal dreads us more than that cancer of which his mistress Anne of Austria is dying,' said he, as he pressed my hand, and I left him.

CHAPTER VII.

CHARENTON.

THE horse I rode, my new bay horse Dagobert, was a beautiful animal, and his housings were worthy of the generous donor, whose strange freedom of manner and voluptuous image, filled all my thoughts as I rode on; and heedless of the way to Paris, caracoled along the green lanes and hedge-rows, until I lost the main road, and found myself at a village beside a broad river. It proved to be Charenton-on-the-Marne, and about four miles from Paris. I was about to ride on, when my informant, who was an innkeeper, asked me to tarry and refresh.

'There is an inn here?' said I.

'An inn? I should think so! and there is no better in

France ; 'tis my own, M. le Chevalier ; an inn where Henri Quatre himself has dined and got drunk, and where you may still see his favourite oath, *Ventre Saint Gris*, written with his diamond ring on a window.'

It was a quaint old tumble-down house, at the end of the stone bridge, with pigeon-holes for windows, and covered up to the chimney tops in luxuriant ivy and wild roses. Without dismounting, I drank a pot of wine under the sign-board, which bore on one side three fleurs-de-lis, and on the other a likeness of Henry the Great, with his famous white feather in his helmet, waggishly on one side, just as he wore it at the battle of Ivry. This sign-board had been painted, for a pot of wine and a loaf of bread, by a poor discharged soldier, who was travelling to Paris ; and this dusty wayfarer was now known to honourable fame as Nicolas Poussin, of whom Louis XIII. was proud to be the patron.

'And how came it to pass,' said I, 'that within four miles of the Louvre, Henry the Great halted at an auberge so humble as this ?'

'It was all an accident, M. le Chevalier,' replied the host, receiving my empty tankard with a profound bow. 'You must know, that one day Henry IV. was hunting in yonder wood, on the left bank of the Marne, and having outridden all his company, and left even the twenty-four chosen gentlemen of the Scottish guard far behind, he arrived here at nightfall weary and travel-stained, with a lame horse and a sharpened appetite. Of the hostess he inquired if he could have anything to eat.'

"Monsieur has come too late," said she, taking him for a private gentleman, in his long black leather boots, and plain jackwambeson.

"*Ventre Saint Gris !*" muttered the King, in his strong Bearnais accent ; "and for whom is all this dainty roast, which turns so savourily on your spit, madame ?"

"For eight gentlemen, who are upstairs."

““Eight, who—madame?”

““Gentlemen, whom I believe to be solicitors of Paris.”

““Then say to them, madame, if you please, that a gentleman, a traveller who is weary, begs the honour of being permitted to sit at the same board with messieurs the solicitors, and that he will gladly pay for his share of the repast with a good flask of wine to boot.”

‘The hostess duly delivered the message, but the solicitors being low fellows, loudly and rudely declined.

““No!” exclaimed they; “no, sang-dieu! not if your traveller were Henry IV himself!”

““Ventre Saint Gris!” swore the King again, and, drawing his sword, laid hold of the roasted meat.

‘At that moment a chevalier of the Scottish Guard appeared, having discovered the inn quite by accident, and the profound salute he accorded to her visitor surprised and terrified the landlady.

““Sieur Blane,” said the King.—’

‘*Blane!*’ I reiterated; ‘oh, heavens! this Scottish guardsman was *my father!*’ But, heedless of me, the garrulous Frenchman, full of his story, continued :

““Sieur Blane,” said the Bearnais, “I am likely to be starved in this devil of an inn, for there are up stairs eight solicitors of our city of Paris, who have seized all the provisions, and will not permit me to eat with them!”

‘The Sieur Blane drew his sword, and, curling up his long mustachios, swore he would put every man of them to death; but at that moment in came the Sieur de Vitry, with ten more gentlemen of the Scottish Guard: so to teach messieurs the solicitors politeness for the future, they were all seized and sent to Grosbois, where they were well whipped with a bridle-rein, their threats, entreaties, and remonstrances only exciting laughter in the Sieur Blane and his comrades. Hence, mon sieur, my inn bears the head of the brave Bearnais—king Henry IV’

I thanked the landlord, slipped a coin into his hand, and after gazing with more than ordinary attention at this quaint old auberge, where, more than thirty years ago, my brave father had this remarkable adventure with ‘the arbiter of Christendom,’ I left Charenton, and turned the head of Dagobert towards Paris; but I was so much delighted with the paces, speed, and beauty of the fine animal, that I caracoled round the boulevards, and noon was long passed before I entered by the ancient gate of St. Marcel.

My heart was full of exultation and gratitude.

‘Fortune, what have I done, that thou shouldest favour me thus?’ I exclaimed, while prancing along, thinking of the beauty of Clara d’Amboise, the too evident favour with which she viewed me, and the brilliant prospect she had opened before me, by an honourable career in the Scottish Guard—the oldest and most noble body of men-at-arms the world ever saw; but on the cornice of the gate of St. Marcel I perceived *a skull*, bare, white, and bleached. This gave my thoughts an unpleasant turn, and the warnings of the Marquis recurred to my memory.

On inquiry, I was informed that this poor remnant of humanity was the head of Guy de Beaumanoir, Baron de Fontenelle, who had been accused many years ago of a design to deliver up the fortress of Dournenes to the Spaniards, for which he was dragged to the Place de la Grève, and barbarously broken alive on the wheel.

I rode through the heart of the city, crossed the Place Maubert and the Pont de Notre Dame, and proceeded along the crowded quays, where every variety of signboard, indicative of trade and traffic, with barbers’ glittering basins, were swinging in the wind, and where many a veiled figure of Mary Queen of Scots—*la Reine Blanche*—the invariable sign of a French milliner, was displayed; and thence along the quaint Rue St. Germain l’Auxerrois, at the end of which I perceived the pointed turrets, the narrow windows, and

guarded drawbridge of the palace of Francis I —the Louvre—which I, who had never seen a statelier building than the barred and moated towers of our Scottish barons, conceived to be the grandest edifice in the world.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE MARECHAL DE LOGIS.

A SOLDIER of the Grey Musketeers, who was on duty at one of the gates, politely directed me to the quarters of Patrick Gordon, the Marechal de Logis of the Garde du Corps Ecossais.

He proved to be a hale and handsome old man, a cadet of the house of Lochinvar; his beard and mustachios were almost white, and his complexion was very dark; a sword-cut, the badge of some battle-field—a badge which he valued more than his crosses of St. Lazare and Mont Carmel—traversed his right cheek by a long and ghastly line. His costume was somewhat of the Spanish fashion, being brown velvet laced with silver; he had a high ruff, and long buff boots, with gold spurs. A white-satin scarf sustained his steel-hilted rapier, into the bowl of which he usually stuffed his laced handkerchief. I announced myself, and all further explanations were cut short, by his saying—

‘Welcome, M. Blane, to France, and to the Louvre! expected you, for the Marquis, who has just left me, mentioned that you were to join us. You shall be at once enrolled in the cuirassiers of the Guard, with those two gentlemen, who have just arrived in Paris, this morning, from Scotland.’

Two gentlemen richly dressed, each with a pair of pistols in his girdle, who were in the recess of a window, where they had been observing a regiment of light horse passing along

the Rue St. Germain l'Auxerrois, now came forward, and the Marechal de Logis at once introduced us all.

One who was tall and fair, with a long mustache, his hair cut short, and a stern expression of eye, and who wore a white satin pourpoint, with gloves and boots of pink perfumed leather, proved to be Richard Maxwell, Viscount of Dundrennan. His grandfather, the cunning old commendator, having had influence enough to get the abbey-lands of Dundrennan erected into a temporal lordship, as the reward of certain doubtful services performed under the Regent Mar, who was poisoned by the Regent Morton.

The other, who was a dark man, with aquiline features, a square forehead, a black, expressive eye, and a perpetual smile, was Sir Quentin Home of Ravendean, one of the new baronets of Nova Scotia, usually known at home as the Laird of Redden. Both were young, handsome, and brave gallants, being free, jovial, and soldierly in manner.

'How came you to Paris, Blanerne?' asked the Viscount, who was the only Maxwell that was not against me in the feud with Nithsdale.

'By the way of Havre, my Lord.'

'Sir Quentin and I came by the way of London, for we had both to cross the borders with greater speed than was quite to our taste.'

'How so, sirs?' asked the Marechal de Logis, looking up from the muster-roll.

Lord Dundrennan coloured, but did not reply.

'You must know, sir,' said the Laird of Redden, 'that our friend the Viscount, to the great scandal of the kirk session and whole community of Dundrennan, conceived a vehement regard for the buxom wife of the abbey miller; and, with a dozen of Maxwells, all armed to the teeth, in back, breast, and pot, with partizan and pistol, he laid siege to the mill one night, when the moon was yet below the waves of the Solway. The dame, nothing loth, sprang into his arms from a back-

window ; but her devil of a husband, who resented this exceedingly, after permitting himself to bawl in a most unseemly manner, had recourse to an arquebuse, and from an eyelet-hole shot one of the Viscount's men through the jaws. A general riot ensued, and somehow, in the confusion, the mill was burned, and the poor miller was found drowned in his dam. My lord of Kirkcudbright, the steward of the stewartry, raised his vassals to punish these proceedings ; and to avoid the Commissioners of Justiciary, my friend mounted a horse one night, crossed the borders, and went to London. There he met me in the Scots' Walk one day, looking out for a passage hither, for I too had become involved in an unpleasant scrape.'

' And had to leave Scotland hastily ?'

' Yes, Marechal de Logis—it happened thus. One night, when riding near Berwick Bounds, with a few of my friends and kinsmen, all well horsed and armed with jack and spear, we found a herd of fine fat cattle grazing on the Debatable Land ; and mistaking them for our own, we very naturally drove them homeward at a smart trot, ever and anon striking them with the flat of our swords, or administering a goad with the lance. Instead of being ours, however, they proved to be, unfortunately, the property of the English Governor of Berwick, who sent after us a party of horse, commanded by one of the King's captains. Now everybody knows that English troops dare not enter Scotland without violating the rights of the nation ; thus a conflict ensued—the captain was a very troublesome fellow, so I ran him through the body ; but we were defeated, and the cattle retaken. The English Governor complained to Sir Archibald Acheson, of Glencairn, the Secretary of State for Scotland, and warrants were issued against me ; so one evening I marched off without beat of drum ; but being without a passport, was taken at Carlisle, and sent back to Scotland. Our Secretary was disposed to be vindictive, and placed me in the castle of Lochmaben,

charged with riot and felony ; but my keeper, the Javellou^r, fell and broke his arm one day, while speaking to me ; so I took care not to miss the opportunity, and wrenching away his keys, locked him up in my place. I then left the castle, and taking with me the best horse I could find, rode to Dumfries, where I sold my nag and a valuable ring, got shipping for England, and reached London with a few crowns in my pouch, bent on seeking foreign service. At the King's Head, in Southwark, I lived with the Viscount Dundrennan, who was on the same errand. The Rye carrier furnished us with saddle-horses at twelve shillings a man. We reached Rye, one of the Cinque Ports, about sixty miles from the English capital, and put up at the Mermaid, outside the ramparts. The bully host was saucy to us, because we were Scots—so I stuffed his wig down his throat, while the Viscount flung all the furniture out of the windows. The churlish townsmen betook them to staves and bills ; but we fought our way to a French lugger—one of those craft that are generally engaged in the conveyance of chalk from the cliffs near the East Bourne—and got clear off, with a few bruises. Landing at Dieppe, we lodged at the house of an Englishman, near the church of St. James. On the very day we arrived, I became, embroiled in an affair of honour. On the ramparts, which are the public promenade, a gentleman jostled me somewhat rudely, and passed on ; but I twitched the end of his manle saying,

“ ‘ Monsieur will, of course, apologise ? ’ ”

“ ‘ That, I think should rather be *your* task,’ said he.

“ ‘ A task it would be—but it shall be my pleasure to teach you politeness ; follow me.’ ”

“ We reached a retired place near the old castle of Dieppe —threw our hats and cloaks on the ground, and drew our rapiers.

“ ‘ You have challenged me,’ said my antagonist ; “ I therefore have the right of weapons.”

“ ‘Agreed,’ said I.

“ ‘Your name, Monsieur?’ said he ; ‘I always like to know the names of those I kill.’

“ ‘Sir Quentin Home, a Baronet of Scotland—yours?’

“ ‘M. le Comte de Forgatz——’

‘ Good Heavens ! exclaimed the Marechal de Logis ; ‘he is the greatest duellist and most deadly shot in France. It is a miracle that you are alive !’

Sir Quentin smiled with careless disdain.

‘ We tossed up for the first fire and it fell to the Count. He fired, and the ball grazed my right ear—.’

‘ The devil ! that was a close shave.’

“ ‘Now, M. le Comte,’ said I, “ ‘tis my turn—up with your right hand.”

‘ He delayed.

“ ‘Up with it, or by the soul of St. Andrew, I will shoot you through the heart !’

‘ He held it up, and in an instant my bullet whistled right through the palm of it.

“ ‘A thousand curses !’ he exclaimed, in a voice hoarse with rage and pain, as he dashed his pistol at my head ; but I forced him to apologise for daring to jostle me, and so the affair ended.’

‘ Bravo !’ said the old Marechal de Logis ; ‘ *Fier comme un Ecossais !* as the French have it.’

‘ After this camisado, we hired horses, and at Rouen swam them through the river Seine in sheer bravado, because the bridge of boats had been swept away. At Santeville, the Viscount fought a duel in defence of a grisette, and disarmed his antagonist, a gigantic officer of Swiss, at the third pass and so, without further adventure, we reached Paris this morning. These are *our* adventures ; and now Mr. Blane for *yours*.’

I soon related mine at least, all with which I deemed it

prudent to acquaint two such hare-brained youths as my new comrades.

‘Now, my Lord Dundrennan and gentlemen, you are fairly enrolled as members of king Louis’ Ancient Scottish Guard,’ said the Marshal de Logis; ‘be pleased to sign your names here, after the usual oaths of allegiance and fidelity to his most Christian Majesty, which are all in accordance with those acts of the Scottish Parliament, by which the subjects of France and Scotland are naturalised each in the country of the other. Then we shall adjourn to the Fleur-de-lis, where you must all dine with me. I will bring two or three other gentlemen of the corps, and we will have all your news about poor old Scotland, the king and kirk, over a few bottles of prime burgundy.’

‘Thanks, Marechal de Logis,’ said the Viscount.

‘With pleasure,’ said I; and after Patrick Gordon had bundled away his documents, we took our swords and cloaks, and sallied forth.

Gordon showed us the new buildings which were in course of erection in the Place Dauphine, and the Bridge Marchand, which had been built a few years before in place of the picturesque Pont aux Meuniers, by Charles le Marchand, captain of the arquebusiers and archers of Paris in 1608, who undertook, with permission of Henry IV., to erect the said bridge, on condition that it should bear his name. Close by were the ruins of the ancient Pont aux Meuniers which had a mill under every arch, and which broke down on the night of the 22nd December, 1596, destroying five hundred persons, every one of whom, as the Marechal de Logis informed us, had enriched themselves by the massacre of St. Bartholomew. Here, too, stood the pigeon market, whence the bridge was named at times the Pont aux Colombes.

‘Oho, chevalier,’ said Gordon, to a gay gentleman clad in cloth of gold, with a red feather in his hat, who was bidding

adieu to a pretty woman, who seemed to be the wife of a bourgeois ; ‘ I see they still sell pigeons on the Pont aux Colombes ? ’

‘ Occasionally, Patrick, and game of other kinds, too,’ said he, saluting us with a merry smile.

‘ We are all going to dine at the Fleur-de-lis. Will you join us ? ’

‘ With pleasure.’

‘ Tis one of ourselves, gentlemen,’ continued the frank old Marechal de Logis ; ‘ allow me to introduce the Chevalier Livingstone, one of the bravest gallants in the Scottish Guard ; Viscount Dundrennan, Sir Quentin Home, and the Laird of Blanerne, have all come, chevalier, from our dear auld mither Scotland, to fight for king Louis of France.

We all bowed and shook hands.

The Chevalier Livingstone was the younger son of Henry Count of Angoûleme, who was the son of Henry II., by a daughter of the Scottish house of Linlithgow, and in right of his grandmother’s blood was admitted into the Scottish Guard.

As we rambled towards the Rue d’Ecosse, we passed the magnificent house of the famous courtesan Marion de l’Orme, which by chance had a company of the Cardinal’s musketeers drawn up before it. This occasioned a hundred irreverend jokes from the chevalier and the lively old Marechal de Logis ; and here another handsome cavalier of the Scottish Guard, Raynold Cheyne, of Dundargle in Fifeshire, joined us. His doublet was of black velvet, so thickly ornamented with jet that it glittered like a corslet in the sun. His mantle was dark crimson ; his long boots were of black leather ; his sword and dagger hilts of silver, and altogether he was a sombre, picturesque, and impressive-looking fellow.

I saw the statue of Henry the Great as we passed along the Rue St. Honoré, and in that quaint old street the Feronnerie,

Cheyne showed me the exact spot where, twenty-three years before, Henry had perished under the dagger of Ravaillac, beneath the windows of a notary named Pontrain, at a place where the street was crowded and rendered more narrow by the little shops which are built against the walls of the church-yard of St. Innocent.

‘Hah!’ said the old Marechal de Logis, with a grin, ‘had our Scottish Guard been with Henry in lieu of his wretched French lacqueys, Ravaillac had never achieved the dreadful deed of that day! ’

‘And where were they?’ asked the Viscount.

‘They were marching towards the frontier, as a war was expected with Spain,’ replied our veteran comrade, as we found ourselves in the Rue d’Ecosse, and at the sign of the Golden Fleur-de-lis, kept by Maitre Pierre Omelette.

CHAPTER IX.

WE DINE AT THE FLEUR-DE-LIS.

THIS hotel was a picturesque old mansion having three sharp wooden gables that cut the blue sky overhead, and projected over the street on beams of grotesquely-carved wood, which rested on stone pillars, like some of the old timber-fronted houses of king James IV’s time which I had seen at home. A large sign-board bearing a blue shield powdered with golden fleurs-de-lis swung on a rusty iron rod above the thoroughfare.

The arrival of six cavaliers all so showily attired--five of them at least being so—with plume and mantle, sword and dagger, and having, moreover, in their hats the white silver

cross of St. Andrew, which in Paris was the distinguishing badge of that patrician band the Guard du Corps Ecossais, made the host bow at least eighteen successive times to the red rosettes of his garters as he ushered us into a plainly-furnished room, decorated by a few coarse Flemish engraving of the wars in Flanders—the siege of the Brielle and the fighting at the Isle Rhé. There were also two tawdry prints of the beautiful Ninon de l'Enclos, which the Chevalier Livingstone and Raynold Cheyne pronounced to be execrable likenesses, and proposed to tear down.

My friends being all gay fellows entered as noisily as a herd of scholars broken loose from school—all jokes and laughter—for in Paris all seemed to live as if their lives and joys were to last for ever, like those of the gods in Homer.

‘By the devil’s mercy, M. Fleur-de-lis, my brave bully host,’ said the Marechal de Logis, ‘but thy wife looks well and rosy!'

‘As if she were a widow,’ added the Chevalier Livingstone, pinching her chin.

‘Dinner for six, Madame Omelette—and plenty of Burgundy—’

‘Nay Marechal, devil strangle me, no Burgundy for me—but Champagne—the pure wine of Champagne,’ said Cheyne of Dundargle, who had lost his left ear under Lord Teviot at the capture of Nanci in 1633.

‘Champagne and Burgundy be it—M. le Duc de Burgundy’s best, by Jupiter!’ said the Viscount.

To the devil with Jupiter and all false gods,’ cried Sir Quentin, adding his voice to the din; ‘let us all shout Vive le Roi!'

‘Tis all the French thou hast learned yet.’

‘Tis enough for me, Viscount.’

‘And will serve thee under fire,’ said the Marechal de

Logis ; ‘ but make love to a grisette, and she will soon teach you French.’

‘ Thanks for the advice, sir. I have already engaged a preceptress.’

‘ What ! you who have not been twenty-four hours in Paris ?’

‘ Yes, I. The language of the eyes will aid the language of the tongue.’

‘ Of course, Viscount,’ said the Chevalier Livingstone. ‘ Noel ! Noel ! say I, like Messieurs le Bourgeois, whenever they are pleased, and choose to quote the canticle.’

‘ Aha, chevalier ! where do they cry this ?’

‘ At the Petit Theatre, where the old scriptural moralities are acted by women quite nude. Yes, sirs. Zounds ! Viscount Dundrennan, what would your sobersided kirk session say to that ?’

‘ And to buying pigeons in daylight at the Pont aux Colombes ?’ added Dundrennan, laughing.

‘ Seats, gentlemen,’ said Pierre Omelette, the host, ‘ for dinner waits.’

‘ Thank Heaven !’ exclaimed the Chevalier, ‘ for I am alike tired and hungry. This forenoon I have fenced with the King’s master ; drank with Chavagnac ; chatted with Richelieu ; flirted with Marion in his absence ; lost fifty crowns at primero with the Duchesse de Bouillon ; I have heard *le Fête d’Amour* sung at the Opera in the Tennis Court de Bellair ; I tried a new horse for Mademoiselle Chevreuse quite round the Boulevard des, and I am here !’

The dinner ordered by our old Marechal de Logis was sumptuous ; but I cannot say that I enjoyed it much ; everything was cooked in the French fashion ; thus, fish, flesh, and fowl were so disguised that I never knew of which I was partaking. The wines were excellent, and amid merriment and anecdotes, the evening slipped joyously away.

The brusque air, the soldierly gaiety and jollity of these

brave spirits proved very infectious and captivating. My heart expanded with pleasure at the conviction that I was one of them ; and I longed—a poor ambition, perhaps—to emulate them in their career of hare-brained frolics, duels, flirtations, and intrigues. As yet I felt myself but a boy ; while they were men, who treated me as an equal, and though not many years my senior, Cheyne and the Chevalier were veritable patriarchs in experience and knowledge of the world—the wicked world of Paris.

The quarrels of our King and Kirk and all the Scottish news—the cloud that overhung our government and the threatened war with England—were soon discussed, for we were sure that these disputes would come to the musket at last. Then we spoke of everything on the tapis ; the cruel burning of Madame la Marechale d'Ancre for witchcraft ; the alleged beauty of Marie Louise of Lorraine, who was said to be secretly and politically intriguing in Paris ; of the projected war against her father the Duke ; of duels and of girls ; of Cardinal Richelieu's state craft and profound cunning ; of the last new poem by Corneille, and the latest work of Poussin, who, from being a poor disbanded soldier in the regiment of Tavannes in which he served during the wars of Charles IX. and Henry IV., had become the equal of Raphael ; of the beauty of the Countess d'Amboise (my heart leaped at her name), the last mistress of the king, and she was declared to be superior in loveliness even to the younger and lovely Marion de l'Orme.

Every liaison in and about the Court was freely discussed. The names of countesses and courtezans, grisettes and grandees were all jangled together-pell mell by these reckless fellows. The intrigues of the Coadjutor ; of Mademoiselle de Chevreuse ; of the beautiful Duchesse de Montbazon and the Duc de Beaufort, were all canvassed as freely as if they had been the love-affairs of students or musketeers, with grisettes and flower-girls.

All this seemed wonderfully easy, free, and, to me, at a little brilliant and captivating; for I was barely twenty years of age.

Some of their anecdotes and adventures were very remarkable.

Raynold Cheyne, of Dundargle, when quite a youth had served as a cuirassier, under the famous Raymond, Count de Montecuculi, in after years the rival of the great Turenne. Once, when on the march through Germany, the Count had given orders that, on pain of death, no soldier or cavalier under his command, should tread down ripened corn. A soldier who rode a wild and unmanageable horse, spurred it recklessly through a field of yellow grain near Leipzig; and then Montecuculi ordered the Provost-Marshal to hang him without ceremony at the first halting-place; but the soldier advanced to Count Raymond and resolutely pleaded his innocence, laying the whole blame upon his horse.

‘Silence, sir!’ said the Count, haughtily; ‘the Provost-Marshal shall do his duty. Away with him!’

‘Count Raymond,’ exclaimed the cuirassier, full of rage and vengeance, ‘I was guiltless before; but shall no longer be so?’ and levelling his arquebus, before he could be disarmed, he fired a bullet through his colonel’s plume.

‘Thou art a brave fellow!’ said the Count, with a sudden admiration of his heedless daring; ‘I pardon thee—give me thy hand; and, in the charge to-morrow, let us see who will go furthest among the Swedish ranks—thou or I.’

Next day was fought the great battle of Leipzig; where the furious ardour of the Count de Montecuculi carried him so far among the ranks of the victorious Swedes, that he was taken prisoner. One soldier, who attempted to rescue him, was also taken. He was the hero of the cornfield adventure—Raynold Cheyne, of Dundargle—who thereafter left the Imperial service and joined the Scottish Guard.

‘Have you seen the house that the Comte de Treville, captain of the Musketeers, has built for Ninon de l’Enclos?’ asked the Marechal de Logis, after the foregoing anecdote.

‘Ninon,’ murmured, the chevalier; ‘the beautiful Ninon—no.’

‘Tis quite a Palais Royale!’ said Cheyne.

‘How—has he left Marion de l’Orme?’

‘No—for she still visits him at night, disguised as a page. So M. de Bouillon told me.’

‘Oho—just as she visits Richelieu.’

‘She looked charming as she passed the cabaret where we dined yesterday, chevalier.’

‘Yes, Marechal, attended by Rouville, who fought the due about her with La Ferté Senecterre, exchanging five pretty sword-thrusts and two pistol-shots.’

‘She has a divine hand!’

‘And magnificent bust.’

‘But she spoils it,’ said Livingstone, ‘by those hideous stays that are now in fashion.’

‘Ah—that devilish invention of the queen of M. Henri le Grand,’ said the Marechal de Logis, for, in phraseology and tastes, these Gardes Ecossais had become quite French.

‘Still, she is not comparable to Madame d’Amboise,’ observed Cheyne.

‘If we go to war with Duke Charles,’ said the Viscount, ‘what will the King do with his beautiful Lorrainer?’

‘Send her to keep company with La Fayette in her convent perhaps.’

‘Her brother Raoul d’Ische commands a fortress in Alsace,’ said Gordon; ‘but is it true that the Marquis our captain has quite relinquished Marion de l’Orme?’

‘Always that woman,’ said the chevalier, laughing; ‘pon my soul, Marechal, I begin to think you are in love with her yourself.’

‘ Having a fortune to spend—my poor pay as *Marechal de Logis of horse.*’

‘ No—the Marquis has only been playing a game of three points. In love with *Mademoiselle de Chevreuse*, with the *Duchesse de Bouillon* and with Marion.’

‘ So if he loses one point, two still remain.’

‘ But the blue-eyed *Chevreuse* is said to view with favour our brave countryman the Lord Teviot, a colonel of pikes.’

‘ Then she must find a successor,’ said Gordon, ‘ for my Lord Teviot was yesterday committed to the Bastille for slaying a Chevalier of St. Lazare in a duel.’

‘ To the Bastille!’

‘ To the Bastille—for a duel!’ we all exclaimed, indignantly.

‘ Yes—but it was fought within the precincts of the *Palais Royale*.’

‘ Zounds!’ said Raynold Cheyne, twisting his fierce moustache, ‘ in the days of Henry the Great, we might have fought in his bed-chamber, and I am sure the brave Bearnais would have enjoyed the sport.’

‘ And what was the duel about?’ I asked.

‘ Oh! the old story—a girl—a *fleuriste* on the *Pont de Notre Dame*.’

‘ And the chevalier was killed?’

‘ Run right through the body,’ replied Gordon; ‘ and the Cardinal, at the instance of Marion, whose lover M. le Chevalier had formerly been, sent his Lordship to the Bastille.’

‘ Too bad this!’ exclaimed the Viscount; ‘ my Lord Teviot could not help this sprig of a chevalier not being immortal. But why has a Cardinal all this power?’

‘ Because he is a minister, and since the days of Henry IV France has always been governed by ministers or—their mistresses.’

Sir Quentin Home whose circumstances had been some-

what desperate since he killed the English captain at Berwick now proposed cards.

‘Let us play, gentlemen,’ said he; ‘Blane we will draw lots for partners.’

‘Nay, Sir Quentin,’ said I; ‘I beg to be excused, having only ten louis.’

‘The devil thou hast? I have only *two* in the world.’

‘Then, why play?’

‘For that very reason,’ said he.

‘But you may lose.’

‘But I may win.’

‘Thank you—but I would rather be excused.’

Sir Quentin frowned and pushed aside his glass.

‘Never mind, Ravendean,’ said the jolly Marechal de Logis; ‘all the world are going to fight the Emperor and the Duke of Lorraine; and we shall have rare pickings and plenty of prize-money, when we march through Alsace and bend our cannon on the Rhine. Long ere that day comes to pass Sir Quentin, thy two louis may have become twenty thousand. Now, gentlemen, a glass of right Rhenish all round, and then we shall adjourn to the Comedie Française, and see all those beauties we have been talking about—yes, see them in all the bloom of beauty, rouge and patches, brocade and cloth of gold.’

From the Fleur-de-lis we went after dusk to the Hotel de Bourgogne, where plays had been acted since 1548, and where we saw a tragedy by Scuderi, about heaven knows what, but every one was killed in the last scene, to the entire satisfaction of the audience. After a petty brawl with the watch, and singing a chorus under the windows of Marion de l’Orme, we all repaired to our quarters in the Louvre.

And thus, at midnight, closed the first day I spent with my wild and fiery comrades of the Garde du Corps Ecossais.

THE SCOTS IN FRANCE.

CHAPTER X.

THE SCOTS IN FRANCE.

I WAS now fairly one of the hundred cuirassiers of that Scottish Guard, whose name is inseparably connected with the ancient royalty and military history of France, and who formed the right hand of her kings in many a day of battle.

My horse, Dagobert, the gift of the Countess d'Amboise, was a fine Spanish barb, worth at least seven hundred crowns of the sun. My arms and armour, supplied from the royal arsenal, were similar to those worn by my comrades, and consisted of a pale buff coat so thickly laced with silver as to be almost sword-proof; a triple-barred helmet, with back and breast-plates, gorget and gloves of the finest and purest steel, inlaid with gold; an arquebuse, two feet and a half long, attached to a belt by a swivel. The pair of pistols, the dagger, and long bowl-hilted Toledo rapier were my own.

Our plumes were white and blue, (the Scottish colours), our scarfs and hocquetons, worn when attending the king at mass or near his throne, were also white, trimmed with blue and silver, in token of the pure fidelity which for centuries had characterised the gentlemen of the Garde du Corps Ecossais.

My apartments in the Louvre were neatly but plainly furnished by the valet de chambre de tapissier, or king's upholsterer, Jean Baptiste Poquelin, in whose shop was his son, a sharp little lad of fourteen years, who carried parcels and messages. Who could then have foreseen that *this little lad*, who bore one's love letters and bouquets for a denier, or called a fiacre from the stand at the street corner, would become after years the great Moliere, the author of '*L'Etourdi*' and '*Le Dépit Amoureux*'?

And now will the reader pardon the honest vanity—the esprit du corps—of a soldier, when writing of his colours—of his regiment, if I devote a few lines to the previous history of the Scottish Guard?

The French annals inform us, that in virtue of the ancient league between Achaius, King of Scotland and Charlemagne, the latter *first* had a Scottish guard, and in return for the compliment, Achaius first fenced the Scottish Lion with the Fleur-de-lis, which we may still perceive in the royal standard.

Be the story or origin of this league what it may, there can be no doubt that Charles of France, in the year 882, *had* an armed guard of twenty-four Scotsmen, whom he preferred to his own people, and whose ponderous battle-axes did him good service in the wars he made to fence the See of Rome against the Grecian Emperors; and old historians say, that he first conceived the idea of having this guard by the advice of his old preceptor, a wandering Kuldee, whom some name Alcuin the Scot, and others Joannes Mailosius—or John of Melrose.

At Damietta, in the holy war, the life of St. Louis IX was twice saved by a Scottish band, led by the knights Stewart, Cumming, and Gordon; and in 1254, on his return from Palestine, the king increased the number of this guard to a hundred gentlemen-at-arms, and Charles V afterwards placed them on the regular establishment.*

In 1415, when brave Harry of England won the field of Agincourt, and was acknowledged heir of France by the ignoble Charles VI., the Scottish Guard, led by Robert Patulloch, a native of Dundee, abandoned him, and marching from Paris towards Gascony, joined the gallant Dauphin, to whose assistance came several thousand veteran Scottish infantry, led by John, Earl of Buchan, who gained the battle of Baugé, on the 22nd March, 1421, cutting the English to pieces and slaying the Duke of Clarence, whose coronet was

* See *L'Escosse Francaise*, par A. Houston, &c.

torn from his helmet by the Laird of Dalswinton. It was a desperate battle and a bloody one, as we might well expect when Englishmen and Scot met hand to hand on a foreign shore ; and on that day the Dauphin, thenceforward Charles VII., ordered the Guard to consist of a hundred Scots men-at-arms and a hundred archers, to be commanded by the Earl of Buchan, whom he made Great Constable of France.

Signalising themselves on a thousand occasions, this chosen band of Scottish gentlemen were foremost at the storming of Avranches, in Normandy, in 1422, and at the great battle of Crevan in the following year. After being joined by five thousand comrades from Scotland, they led the furious charge at Verneuille in 1424 ; and destroyed the English convoy under the famous Sir John Fastolfe, in 1429. The Earls of Wigton, Buchan, and Douglas all fell in battle in one day, at the head of the Guard, and were interred in the church of St. Gracian, where their tombs are still to be seen.

Charmed by their unexampled valour and fidelity, Charles VII. ordained that '*le Garde du Corps Ecossoises* should for ever take precedence of all other troops in France.'

In 1495 they were with the French army in Italy, and covered themselves with honour at the conquest of Naples, when Stuart of Aubigne was created Duke of Calabria.

They served under Louis XII. against the Venetians at the battle of Rivolta in 1509 ; and at the battle of Pavia, when Francis I. fell into the hands of the foe, one hundred and ninety-seven of the Scottish Guard lay killed and wounded round him. The King was taken, with *three* of his Scottish ~~Knights~~ *Avaliers*, and gave up his sword, exclaiming—

‘ Gentlemen, we have lost all but our honour !’

In 1570, the Guard was ordained to consist of a hundred men-at-arms, a hundred archers, and twenty-four guards of the sleeve, or keepers of the King’s body ; and, eight years afterwards, at the battles of Gembloers and Mechlin, as

Father Strada tells us, they flung off their armour, and in their doublets routed the Spaniards.

In the year I joined the Guard, there were three corps of Scottish infantry in the French service : viz., the regiments of Hepburn, Ramsay, and Lesly. Like other French corps, they consisted of several battalions. Hepburn's had seven, each a thousand strong. More than twenty regiments of the French line were led by Scottish colonels, and there were two Scottish lieutenant-generals, James Campbell, Earl of Irvine, and Andrew, Lord Rutherford of Hunthill ; while De la Ferte Imbault, a brave veteran, was colonel-general of all the Scottish troops in France.

It would be vain, in a narrative like mine, to enumerate the privileges of the Scottish Guard and people in France.

The league, in which the Garde du Corps originated, declared that between the kingdoms of Scotland and France there should be an inviolable confederacy and friendship for ever ; that injuries offered by the English to either, should be punished by the troops of both ; that all Scottish auxiliaries in France should be maintained by the king of that country ; and that, if any subjects of one nation gave assistance to England, ‘by arms, counsel, or victual,’ against the other, they should be judged guilty of treason.

To these clauses, Alexander II. of Scotland, and Louis VIII. of France, added a fifth :

That neither monarch should receive within his dominions the foreign enemies or domestic rebels of the other.

King Robert II. of Scotland, and Charles V of France, added others, to this effect :

That neither of them should make peace with England without the express consent of the other ; and that the Pope alone could absolve the two monarchs and their successors from the oath and alliance, which were never violated, while the British crowns remained separate.

James IV., in 1491, Henry IV of France and Navarre,

and Marie of Guise and Lorraine, Regent of Scotland in 1558, all renewed and strengthened this league, which always proved so troublesome to our neighbours the English; and hence their old rhyming proverb, which is mentioned by Shakspeare in the first act of ‘Henry V’

‘ HE THAT WOULD FRANCE WIN,
MUST WITH SCOTLAND FIRST BEGIN.’

CHAPTER XI.

MY FIRST PARADE.

AND now, having got through the musty lore of the last chapter, we will return to my own adventures with renewed vigour.

A few days after my enrolment, the trumpets of the Light Horse and Musketeers blew shrilly in the court of the Louvre, announcing that his Majesty was leaving the Council to proceed to mass.

The whole of the Scottish Guard were under arms; the hundred cuirassiers on horseback in full array, with rapier, helmet, and plume; the hundred archers, now archers but in name, as they were armed with arquebuses, and clad in white hocquetons, glittering with lace; and the twenty-four chosen Scottish gentlemen, keepers of the royal body, who never left the King of France until their hands deposited his remains in the regal sepulchre of St. Denis, which was always the last duty of the Scottish Guard, before they encircled the throne of his successor.

Our commander was styled *first captain* of his Majesty’s Guards, and began the military year by serving the first quarter of it.

The court before the Louvre presented a brilliant appearance. The Guards of horse and foot under arms; the Grey

and the Blue Musketeers—all of whom were gentlemen of the best families in France—richly attired, laced and plumed; nobles, chevaliers, pages, and lacqueys, all clad in gorgeous dresses ; horses, gaily trapped, pawing the pavement, impatient for their riders. Amid all this glittering crowd I looked for the carriage of the Countess d'Amboise, but nowhere could see it, yet I was told that it was usually drawn by six white horses.

With all the vanity of youth, I was particularly anxious that she should see me in my brilliant accoutrements, plumed, spurred, and belted. My gay companions laughed and made bold jests when I inquired if she had been seen, for the secret of my patronage had been whispered about, and the old Marechal de Logis told me gruffly that, ‘the King always went to Madame, for Madame dared not come to the King.’

Patrick Gordon had come to parade in a bad humour that morning. A horseman had splashed him with mud, on the Pont de Notre Dame, and he was making loud complaints on the subject to the Commandant of the City Watch and the Chevalier Livingstone.

‘Zounds !’ said he, curling his strong grey moustache up to his eyes, ‘he was only a rascally bourgeois, monsieur ; had I been daubed by the horse of a musketeer, or gentleman, I should not have cared so much, but a cit—a mere cit !’

‘Whom one cannot fight ; it was too bad, M. le Marechal de Logis,’ replied the Captain of the Watch ; ‘why did you not fling him into the Seine ?’

‘Of course,’ added the Chevalier Livingstone ; ‘for a mere bourgeois must be taught that he is not to ride everybody down like a prince of the blood.’

‘Is yonder carriage, which I see drawn by four white horses and guarded by twelve Grey Musketeers, the equipage of the Countess d'Amboise ?’ I asked.

‘Always your Countess,’ grumbled the Marechal ; ‘no, ’tis the Queen’s.’

‘And why has the Countess six ?’

‘ My bon camarado, have you yet to learn that Anne of Austria is only the wife of the most Christian King, while Clara d’Ische is his mistress? This makes all the difference in the world.’

‘ Our old Marechal de Logis has paraded in a bad humour to-day,’ said Raynold Cheyne, as Gordon moved his horse to the rear of our line.

‘ ‘Tis his dark day,’ said the Chevalier; ‘ but, Blane, you cannot know what we mean by that anniversary.’

The day on which he lost his friend and mistress together, by a hasty shot.’

‘ Thirty years ago, that is to say, in April 1605, he stood in high favour with the beautiful Marguerite of Valois, who was then living—and still lovely—at the old embattled Hotel de Sens; but lo! as madame was not so discreet as in the days of the Huguenots, one night he discovered a rival.’

‘ Where?’ I asked, ‘ in her chamber?’

‘ Nay, in the boot of her coach.’

‘ A strange place—well?’

‘ He fired his arquebuse through it, and killed him on the spot.’

‘ The deuce; that was unpleasant!’

‘ After this, Marguerite quitted the Hotel de Sens for ever it became hateful to her. She then built another house in the Fauxbourg St. Germain, near the Seine, and the Pré aux Clercs.’

‘ And the Marechal de Logis?’

‘ Lost her favour for ever; but he did not break his heart, for Marguerite was well past forty. He was supposed to be her ninth lover; but hush, here he comes again.’

There was a flourishing of trumpets, a rolling of drums, a lowering of swords and standards, an uncovering of heads, with a general salute, as a little man, about forty years of age, with a thin, round profile, in a broad hat and feather,

wearing a purple cloak, a prodigiously long sword, having his poor, lean legs encased in wrinkly boots of white perfumed leather, and with the crosses of the Holy Ghost and Notre Dame du Mont Carmel, flashing in diamonds, on his breast, appeared at the grand entrance of the Louvre.

He was Louis XIII.—Louis the Just, whose politics were ever at variance with his inclinations.

He had just left the Council, where the expected war with Lorraine and the Empire was the all-engrossing topic; and as he descended, according to etiquette and to daily use and wont, he gave the parole and countersign for the day to the young and splendid Marquis de Gordon, who, as *première capitaine* of the household troops, stood at his right hand in his white hocqueton and with his lofty plume; he, in turn, gave it to the officers of the Scottish Guard, and to the colonels of the Gensdarmes, Dragoons, and Musketeers; and then the King gave (what he deemed of much more importance) special orders to the keepers of the kennels about his favourite dogs, as he was a passionate lover of the chace—such as it is in France.

By the King's side stalked Richelieu, with a stately step, his keen, hawk-like eyes and prominent cheek-bones full of cunning, and his firm lip and well-defined chin bespeaking dogged perseverance. I gazed with undefined interest upon this lofty prelate, so terrible for his political intrigues, his perspicacity, his subtlety, inflexibility, and revenge.

Around them were the royal confessor, Father Leslie, Principal of the Jesuit College of Toulouse, a tall, grave, and stern-looking Scot; the Masters of the Horse and of the Household; the Grand Chamberlain, M. le Duc de Bouillon who was entirely dressed in cloth of gold, and the four gentlemen of the chamber—viz., the Dukes de Ge; rès, de la Tremouille, de la Beauvillier, and d'Aumont; with the four Captains of the Scots and French Gardes du Corps—the Marquis de Gordon being on the King's right hand. Then

came the Grand Almoner and the officers of the chapel ; the Admiral of France ; the General of the Galleys ; the **Grand Master** of the Artillery ; the Grand Ecuyer ; the Colonel-General of the French Guards, and the Premier President of the Parliament of Paris. Here I also saw the veteran John Louis, **Duc d'Epernon**, Colonel-General of France and Governor of Guyenne, the oldest peer, general, and knight in the kingdom; Lieutenant-General Francis de Bethune, Surveyor of France, Governor of St. Maixant, and once Campmaster of the ancient Regiment de Picardie ; Philibert de Nerestan, the aged Grand Master of the Knights of St. Lazare, and the **Duc de St. Simon**, whom Louis XIII. had made a peer and marshal of France because he was a good judge of dogs, and could blow on a hunting-horn without spitting through it.

This fortunate peer was in close conversation with the Abbé la Rivière, the first man who ever wore a peruke ; and such was the profusion of its curls, that it weighed two pounds—to make up for the lightness of his brain, as my comrade the Viscount suggested.

‘Bravo, M. l’Abbé !’ said Raynold Cheyne ; ‘a dealer in souls with a perfumed periwig !’

Surrounded by musketeers and light horse, with the twenty-four gentlemen of the Scottish Guard, who were the immediate custodiers of the royal person, and escorted by all these peers and soldiers of high rank and sounding name, glittering with jewels, embroidery, and brilliant dresses of silk, velvet, cloth of gold, and cloth of silver, and having all the knightly orders of Europe sparkling on their breasts—Louis was conducted to solemn high mass in the chapel of the Louvre, where the Grand Almoner had all his staff waiting to perform one of those grand musical efforts, which shook the building to its centre.

The moment mass was over, the King repaired to luncheon, after seeing his hounds fed, however, and then we were dismissed. I galloped to our stables, gave Dagobert, my

Spanish barb, to his groom, and without taking time to change my trappings, threw myself into a fiacre, or hackney-coach, and ordered the driver to spare neither whip nor speed until he reached the chateau d'Amboise, as I had not seen my patroness for four entire days.

CHAPTER XII.

THE MOTH AND THE CANDLE.

REMEMBERING the injunctions of the Countess, I avoided the elaborately-carved Porte Cochère, under which a few of the Comte de Treville's musketeers were loitering—so publicly and in defiance of all scandal did Louis XIII. honour this lady with his favour ; and dismissing the fiacre at an angle of the road, I made a détour among the trees of the lawn, and reached unseen the little private postern door, which was hidden in a corner of the chateau, between a broad round tower and a mass of clematis, that overhung a species of bastion projecting into the fosse. The latter was now drained and covered with the smoothest turf. Here I rang a bell, and on being admitted by Antoine, was at once conducted by a private staircase to the apartments of the Countess.

Antoine ushered me into a reception-room, which had hangings of violet-coloured silk, starred with silver, and furniture of walnut-wood, exquisitely carved. Through an arch, festooned with yellow brocade on one side, I saw the sleeping apartment of the Countess, and it was worthy of her beauty. The bed was of richly-carved wood ; the curtains were of rose-coloured velvet, and at the head was framed in oak a curious Flemish painting of the loves of Vertumnus and Pomona, taken from Ovid.

On the other side an archway, also festooned with yellow

brocade, revealed an antechamber, hung with saffron-coloured damask, and on an ebony table a magnificent ruby-coloured Bohemian dessert-service, all pencilled in gold ; dishes of silver piled with fruit, and vases and flasks of wine in iced coolers were arranged for a repast.

‘The devil !’ thought I ; ‘this is unlucky : madame expects some one, for here is a dessert of love apples and wine of Artois !’

I observed myself in an opposite mirror, and was struck by the splendour of my own appearance in the uniform of the guard ; but my brows were knit, and I said aloud—

‘Absurd ;—is this jealousy ?’

‘I hope not, my dear M. Blane, for love alone enters here,’ said a soft voice ; and turning, I saw Madame d’Amboise, in a robe of blue powdered with gold fleurs de lis, and looking so lovely that I was almost bewildered, when kissing her white hand, which was smooth as the finest velvet ; then she smiled with that unmistakable air of pleasure and coquetry, which always lights up the countenance of a charming woman at the effect produced by her own beauty. Her invariable attendant, the delicate girl with the golden hair, withdrew abruptly as we met.

My first inquiry was for the Chevalier d’Ische, her brother.

‘Oh ! he is almost well, and is quite able to walk ; but you—oh, you are so welcome, M. Blane ! and you charm me by this visit. I was longing so much to hear the sound of your voice again. I see you will make it your duty to please me.’

‘Could I but hope to succeed.’

‘Let not your heart fail.’

‘It fails already, madame.’

‘Why ?’

‘Because I am half in love with you.’

‘Only half ?’ she exclaimed, merrily ; ‘oh, fie, M. Blane !

‘I dare not be more, madam,’ I sighed, with a strange mixture of fear, admiration, and perplexity; ‘your beauty awes me.’

‘You will become used to it in time; alas! it is the fate of beauty. Come hither,’ said she, motioning me to a seat beside her on the down fauteuil, and smiling brilliantly, with a gratification that she cared not to conceal. ‘Look at these brilliants,’ she added, opening a scarlet case; ‘they were brought to me this morning.’

‘From Paris?’

‘Jealous again! From the Louvre, by M. Boizenval.’

‘The King’s valet?’

‘Yes; and he announced that the King might visit me to-day, hence this collation, towards which your eyes wander so suspiciously. Oh, poor jealous M. Arthur; but what think you of this necklace?’

‘It would grace the neck of Anne of Austria; but you, madame, require no aid from ornament.’

‘Little fellow, you flatter me already! I have promised M. Poussin, the painter, a sitting to-day; do you think that with these jewels and with this dress I shall make a good picture?’

‘Madame, you would make a divine picture in any dress,’ said I, carried away by the impulse of the moment.

‘Mon Dieu, my boy, what a lover you will make! Who among the Garde du Corps Ecossais will be like you?’

As I had now come to push my fortune in France and in Paris, that place of vague and doubtful morality, I had—for fortunately for myself—at memory all the dialogues, proverbs, and ‘metrical graces’ of the *French Schoole Maister*, published at Edinburgh in 1632; and drew my ideas of continental morals from that small thick volume the *Histoire de Palmerin d’Olive, Fils du Roy Florendos*, translated from Castilian into French by Jean Maugin, *Paris, par Galliot du Pre, 1573*: thus I was never without a ready answer whenever the

Countess threw down the glove. Moreover, I was young, and knew little of the world ; thus her great beauty and brilliance of manner really dazzled me ; and when I bent my eyes upon her, I am ashamed to say, that it was, perhaps, with more of an imploring expression than ever filled them when I attempted to pray ; but I soon forgot to do even that in Paris.

After some conversation of a half-bantering and half-complimentary nature, with a strong tinge of love-making running through it all, I begged that she would give me a little relic to wear, as a remembrance of one who had been so kind to me. Taking from the drawer of a buhl table a charming miniature of herself, set in gold, she threw its ribbon round my neck, saying in a whisper close to my ear, very close indeed,—

‘ Wear this for my sake—it is the work of Nicholas Poussin, and the gift of a king. See his initial L, and a crown in diamonds, are on the back. It may prove a talisman should you ever get into trouble ; for, alas ! the court of France is surrounded by pitfalls and snares, by lures and assassinations.’

‘ Ah, madame, that I might always be near you.’

‘ Why that wish ?’

‘ Forgive me,’ said I, kissing the miniature, and placing it in my breast ; ‘ but I feel myself attracted towards you by an irresistible fatality, like—’

‘ Like what, mon bien amie ?’

‘ Like a poor moth towards the light, which is to consume and destroy it !’ said I, with more real pathos and feeling than the object of this emotion merited.

‘ A terrible simile ! then, M. Arthur, you love me *wholly now* ?’

‘ Oh, Madame la Comtesse, you know not how devotedly.’

‘ Have you nothing better to tell me than all this farrago ?’ she asked coquettishly.

‘ Could I tell you ought that was more interesting?’ said I, dropping my cheek upon her soft white shoulder.

‘ Interesting, mon Dieu! to yourself, perhaps.’

‘ And to you, too, dearest Countess; for you love me in return, I know that you do.’

‘ Well, perhaps I do love you a little; but remember that my love is like fortune.’

‘ How?’

‘ Fickle.’

‘ Alas! do not say so,’ said I, clasping her waist. ‘ Do you remember a promise you made me?’

‘ A promise?’ she reiterated, casting down her long lashes, ‘ I do not remember; what was it?’

‘ That you would give me one of your garters to wear, as M. de Chatillon wears that of Mademoiselle de Guerchi round his sword-arm.’

‘ Yes; but, my poor boy, it would bring you to the wheel, perhaps.’

At that moment while my heart beat like lightning, and a flame seemed before my eyes, the thick arras was hastily drawn aside, and the visage of Antoine—the discreet Antoine—appeared, with the greatest alarm depicted thereon; his eyes were arched to the roots of his hair.

‘ O Madame la Comtesse,’ he exclaimed; ‘ le Roi! place pour sa Majesté le Roi!’

We sprang from the fauteuil in consternation.

‘ Enter here,’ said the Countess, opening the heavy-carved door of a dark Flemish cabinet; ‘ quick, quick, M. Arthur.’

‘ Ah, Countess, if the King becomes tender!’ said I.

‘ Well, what then?’

‘ I may not be able to control my anger.’

‘ What! you will re-enact Ravaillac here, and make my old cabinet historical, like the house of M. Pontrain, the Notary, in the Ferronerie,’ said she, laughing; ‘ bah! you silly boy:

Louis XIII. tender ! Mon Dieu, there is no danger of that In, in ; there are times, like this, when one's dearest friends become, like his Majesty, a decided bore !" and pushing me in with her pretty hands, she locked the door, at which, to my great alarm, her little devil of a dog continued to snuff and snort for a time.

CHAPTER XIII.

LOUIS THE THIRTEENTH.

LEAVING me in some danger of suffocation, and to my own reflections, among which the warnings of the Marquis de Gordon occupied a prominent place, the fair Countess had just time to conceal the key of the cabinet in her bosom, when the arras rose and fell, and Louis XIII. stood before her, with his broad plumed hat under his left arm, and wearing a short velvet cloak and long silver-hilted sword, tilting it up behind him as he continued to bow and advance with a mincing jaunty step, and ended by kissing the hand of the Countess thrice. At his neck hung the plain gold cross usually worn by him when he officiated as one of the twenty canons of the cathedral church of Ambrun—a solemn farce.

Louis the Just—so named because in an age which was still infected by the poisonings and astrologies of the infamous Catherine de Medicis, he had been born under the sign of the Zodiac, called *Libra*, or the Balance—was not of a very amorous nature; but being left almost entirely alone even amid the splendour of his court, and being coldly treated by Anne of Austria his queen, who, like all the great people of Paris, followed in the retinue of the formidable Cardinal Richelieu, *his* minister and, scandal added, *her* lover, he had but two or three domestics whom he loved and trusted;

and who, besides the huntsmen and hounds, were his chief favourites and companions. Among these was particularly Boizerval, his valet de chambre, who usually bore his presents and love letters to Clara, but whom he banished in 1637, for delivering all his tender billets doux—especially those addressed to the fair and unfortunate Fayette—*first* to the tyrannical, prying and overweening Cardinal premier, to whose care, as well as to that of ‘our blessed Lady,’ Louis boasted he had consigned his crown and kingdom, and so troubled himself no more about them, believing like his successor, that ‘they would last *his* time.’

Gallantry had been gradually resolving itself into a grand system during his reign. The brilliant assemblies and gay circles by which Francis I., of magnificent memory, had encouraged the polished intercourse of his court; the gross sensuality which had been introduced by the wicked and Machiavelian Catherine de Medicis, whose fair dames of honour lured to death their Huguenot lovers; when ‘murders were hatched in the arms of love, and massacre was planned in the cabinet of pleasure;’ with the shameless libertinism of Henry IV., were all united now to the serious gallantry which Anne of Austria had brought with her from Spain; and thus under Louis XIII.—though he was very little of a gallant himself—love, in his good city of Paris, became a science like astrology, and was analysed like metaphysics; and thus, as I have said, it was formed into a system, which rendered it the serious occupation of every one, and the way was easily prepared for that more absurd state of things which we find under the Grand Monarque his successor, when affairs of state were debated, and solemn councils of war held, round a courtesan lounging on a sofa, or in a pretty woman’s bedroom; and when a revolution in the heart of a great man’s mistress was an event of nearly as much consequence as a war on the Rhine, or an invasion of Flanders. But to resume—

‘What the deuce is this I hear now, ma belle?’ said the King, as he seated himself just where I had sat a moment before; ‘here is the *Mercure Francais* publicly affirming—for M. Richelieu never tells me anything—that Mademoiselle Marie Louise of Lorraine—Duke Charles’ daughter—is now in Paris, with her brother the Prince of Vaudemont, suborning my officers. ’Tis a serious thing to assert!’

‘ ’Tis impossible, sire!’ exclaimed the Countess, changing colour very visibly; ‘and that is more than improbable.’

‘Nothing is impossible to those accursed Lorraines.’

‘Your Majesty forgets that I am of Lorraine,’ said the Countess with considerable hauteur.

‘Nay, pardon me; but I had hoped you had been long enough in Paris to forget that wicked province.’

‘Lorraine is an independent duchy, sire.’

‘Was you mean, madame, till Henry II., in 1552, reduced it to obedience under the oriflamme, and left there a garrison which cost Charles V some trouble, and thirty thousand of the best soldiers in Spain too! Moreover Metz, Toul, and Verdun were all confirmed to France by the treaty of Château Cambresis in ’59.

‘Your Majesty is excessively tiresome.’

‘I regret to hear it; but how is this sweetheart,’ said Louis, knitting his brows as he surveyed the glittering dress of the lovely Countess; ‘will nothing content you but a robe of blue, powdered with fleurs-de-lis?’

‘It becomes me, sire, does it not?’

‘Who alone are permitted to wear such?’

‘Princesses of the blood royal; but am not I the life of your heart?’

‘Under Henry IV., even the Duchess de Vendosme dared not have worn these, after she was publicly affronted by the Count de Soissons for doing so.’

‘Henry IV. was a bear who should never have left the

woods of the Lower Pyrenees. Your Majesty is in a horrible humour this morning ; but here is luncheon, and there are chessmen—which do you prefer to me ?

‘ Neither, sweetheart, yet I will have you all ; luncheon now, chess after, and you all the while.’

With these words the capricious King sat down to table, and was assisted to various niceties by the white hands of the Countess, with whom he afterwards sat down to chess, of which he was so passionately fond that he played it in his carriage, where the men were pegs inserted into holes in the squares of a perforated board, so that the motion could not displace them.

‘ Ah, Countess,’ he mumbled as the game began, ‘ you have the most adorable hands heaven ever formed !’

‘ Yet they are the hands of a Lorrainer.’

‘ Have you ever seen this Marie Louise, of whom all men talk ?’

‘ No ;’ replied the Countess, coldly ; ‘ but why, sire ?’

‘ Because we are told that she is full of the most dangerous beauty, united to the sweetest sensibility.’

‘ Ah ; she is cunning perhaps, and is one of those who rule by tender glances, tears and sighs, or by an affectation of enthusiasm she never feels. I have known many women of this kind.’

‘ You are piqued, my dear Countess—she is a mere girl—a child.’

‘ So is the Duchess de Montbazon—yet she has had eight lovers.’

‘ You are severe, Clara ; Madame de Montbazon is the wife of a peer of France.’

‘ I care not—for every lover she has, I could easily reckon ten, were I not devoted to your Majesty.’

‘ Thank you—but you forget your game.’

‘ Ah ! sire—a woman forgets the universe itself, when *he* whom she truly loves is present.’

‘Thou flatterest me, Clara,’ said the poor silly King, trembling with pleasure, and in turn playing the deuce with his game.

‘And now I have two or three pretty little requests to make.’

‘Peste! I thought so. Did not the jewels I sent by M. Boizenval satisfy you?’

‘Oh! sire, my letter of thanks expressed all I felt—but you mean not to grudge them to your Clara?’

‘No—no!—and this request—’

‘Monseigneur—(I did not catch the name) departed to the company of the saints yesterday, and has left a fine estate, the baton of a marshal of France, the cross of Saint Esprit, and a regiment of dragoons behind him.’

‘Well,’ said the King, wincing, and making a grimace; ‘tis fortunate that he could not take them all to heaven with him, as I wanted them sorely.’

‘So do I—the baton for Colonel Hepburn, the Scot, who dresses so magnificently—the cross, and the colonelcy of horse, I leave to your Majesty.

‘Thank you, madame, you are exceedingly liberal; Hepburn, shall have his baton, I promise you; but not until he has marched into Lorraine.’

‘Sire, the cross of the Holy Ghost, vacant by the execution of the Duke de Montmorenci, Campmaster of the regiment de Normandie, is not yet filled up.’

‘Well?’

‘I wish it, if you love me,’ said the Countess, starting from the table, and throwing her arms round Louis.

‘What—Countess, you with a cross of my first order?’

‘Marion de l’Orme got one of St. Sepulchre, from the Cardinal, for her lover Senecterre.’

‘And for whom do you wish it?’ asked the King, suspiciously

‘For no lover, but a friend who will give me a thousand crowns for it—Raynold Cheyne of the Scottish Guard.’

‘The cross worn by a peer and marshal of France, the descendant of four constables, one whose patent dates, like our Scottish League, from Charles the Great, for a private gentleman of our guard? Peste!—well, well, ’tis yours, Clara.’

‘Thanks, sire,’ said she, kissing him.

‘Ha! what noise is that in the cabinet?—see, your dog snarls as if some one—’

‘Tis mice, only mice, sire; but here are pen and ink; please to confirm these gifts; I deserve them, since I have been able to anticipate my enemy, the Cardinal.’

The King confirmed them by a line or two, which he handed to the Countess, saying,

‘There is no man in all the Scottish Guard, I value more than Raynold Cheyne, or would trust more—’

‘With anything, but a pretty girl, sire.’

‘True, Madame de Bouillon has quite spoiled him; but favours to our soldiers are not thrown away at present; we have this day decided on the war with Lorraine.’

Through a chink in the old cabinet, I could perceive the Countess start with visible emotion at these words, and as she gave a furtive glance towards a part of the arras, I thought that a fair face, and a tress of golden hair were visible for a moment, as if some one was listening.

‘Would not your Majesty rather send an envoy to the Duke, and seek to arbitrate this matter?’

‘Countess, Richelieu means to send two envoys.’

‘He does, sire?’

‘Yes—the Cardinal Duke de Lavalette, and your friend the Camp-Marechal Hepburn.’

‘How—’

‘With fifty thousand men.’

‘Alas! my poor native province!’

‘Such is our resolve.’

‘ And which way do they march ?’

‘ By the road direct for the frontier, and Elsace Zaberne.

Another glance, and most palpable nod of intelligence were exchanged between the Countess and the eavesdropper, whom I suspected to be her attendant.

‘ If this Duke of Lorraine had four heads, by the bones of St. Louis, I would spike them all on the gate of St. Marcel, beside that of the traitor Guy de Beaumanoir !’

‘ Before that happens, I fear me, that the little Dauphin will have been hailed as Louis XIV ’

‘ Indeed, Countess !’ said the King, with a sardonic grimace.

‘ Yes, sire, and you will be on your way to St. Denis, borne by the twenty-four Scots of the Garde du Corps.’

‘ Perhaps so,’ said the easy King ; ‘ but mort de tout les diables ! let us have no more of politics, for I love to avoid them, and to come here when I am weary of display. The parade and routine of royalty are veritable slavery. Do you remember that fool the Prince of Condé entering Paris in 1616 with no less than fifteen hundred nobles and chevaliers and a thousand partizans in his train, and how he alarmed our royal mother, Mary de Medicis, who thought he had come to sack the city ? By-the-by, in that year she had just finished the Hôtel de Gondi to the tune of forty thousand crowns.’

‘ Sire, you forget that in 1616 I was but a girl,’ said the Countess, pouting again.

‘ Four o’clock,’ said the King, rising, as the hall-clock of the château struck in the turret of the quadrangle ; ‘ and I promised to meet the grand huntsman and grand falconer at Versailles this evening about some little improvements I am making in the kennels and falconry. Fortunately, M Richelieu does not interfere with *them*. I must go.’

‘ So soon, sire ?’

‘ But you will accompany me, Countess, I hope.’

‘ If your Majesty would excuse me—’

She paused, for the pettish Louis knit his brow

‘Countess!—he began impressively.

‘This morning I was so unwell, and slept so little—’

‘Tis the mice in this old château, Countess,’ said the King, glancing round him suspiciously; ‘and this old cabinet—some of M. le Duc de Sully’s furniture, he added, giving it a knock that made my heart to leap, ‘seems a very receptacle for them. We must have it broken and burned!’

The Countess was terrified.

‘I will go, sire,’ she faltered.

‘Thanks, dear Clara; your hand.’

He led her out with his jaunty step again, and they retired.

I heard the wheels of the royal carriage in the avenue a moment after, and then the hoofs of the musketeer escort. As these sounds died away, my heart sank within me, for I was locked in the cabinet, and its key was in the bosom of the Countess, who might return to release me heaven alone knew when!

CHAPTER XIV.

THE OAK CABINET.

My reflections were of a somewhat chequered nature. The amorous dalliance I had observed, and the conversation I had been forced to overhear, shocked and cooled, while it exasperated me. On one hand I found the Countess evidently taking money from officers, peers, and gentlemen for titles and crosses cajoled from the facile king; and on the other, I perceived her drawing from him intelligence concerning the intended war against the Duke of Lorraine, in whose secret interest she and her attendant, as natives of his duchy, were perhaps naturally enough enlisted. Then I thought of my

present predicament—locked up in a secret cabinet, in a remote part of this ancient château, where my outeries might be unheard. Clara might be induced, or perhaps by circumstances compelled, to remain at Versailles for a night; perhaps for three nights, or even longer!

The perspiration burst over me with this idea!

I was for duty next day at the Louvre, and if I did not appear—I strove to break open the door of the oak cabinet, but it was strong and immovable as the face of a bastion.

While these thoughts were passing through my mind I heard a voice singing the burden of the old provincial song,—

‘Vive le fils d’Harlette,
Normands,
Vive le fils d’Harlette!’

and two cavaliers richly dressed, and each armed with sword and dagger, and a pair of handsome pistols suspended by silver hooks from their belts, entered laughing, and evidently bent on a frolic. In one I recognized the Chevalier d’Ische. He was still pale from the effects of his wound. The other, I had no doubt, was his companion on that night of the brawl about the girl Nicola in the Place de la Grève.

‘Prince, are your pistols loaded?’ asked the Chevalier.

‘Mordieu! I should think so. But why?’

‘Dost see the carved face on the door of that old worm-eaten cabinet?’

‘A satyr’s head among leaves—yes.’

‘Tis just where a man’s breast would be.’

‘Well?’

‘Ten louis to a denier you don’t hit it, Prince’

‘Done! But how if the shot is heard?’

‘Diable! what do I care?’

‘But the Countess’s antique cabinet!’

‘Tis only an old wooden box at best.’

‘But the Countess—’

‘Tush!’

‘ What will she say ? ’

‘ Say—morbleu, M. le Prince—what she pleases. Will you fire ? ’

‘ Peste ! since you will have it so,’ muttered the other, drawing a pistol from his girdle.

‘ You fear my challenge ? ’

‘ Tudieu ! Chevalier, I fear nothing ! ’

The reader may imagine my sensations during this challenge to a trial of skill. I remembered the story Raynold Cheyne and the Chevalier Livingstone had told me, of our Marechal de Logis shooting a man in the boot of the queen’s carriage, at the Hotel de Sens ; and though my soul seemed to tremble within me, at the sudden prospect of death, true to the spirit of honour and of the age, I held my breath, and while my heart forgot to beat, I resolved to die rather than speak, or disgrace the Countess by uttering a sound.

The Prince cocked and levelled his pistol.

The Chevalier uttered a loud laugh, arrested his arm, and springing forward, unlocked and opened the door of the cabinet, saying,

‘ Come forth, M. Blane—by Jupiter, how pale you look ! ’

‘ Morbleu ! but you are a gallant fellow ! ’ exclaimed he (who was styled Prince), with astonishment ; ‘ I knew not that there was any one within.’

‘ He is brave as Bayard ! I knew of it, and did this but to test his courage.’

‘ How knew you that I was in the cabinet, Chevalier ? ’ I asked, leaping out.

‘ Nicola, the Countess’s attendant—’

‘ She with the beautiful hair ? ’ said I.

‘ Ah—thou hast observed that ! ’ said the Prince, knitting his brows.

‘ How could I fail to do so ? Well, and the pretty Mademoiselle Nicola—’

‘ Brought me the key of the cabinet, which, with a signi-

fificant glance, the Countess threw to her from the carriage unseen, as she drove off with the King ; and mademoiselle told me to release you. But, my friend, to be one of the Scottish Guard, you are engaged in a perilous game, I think. Peste ! if King Louis discovers you playing at bo-peep in Clara's apartment, I would not give much for your chance of promotion, unless at the Place de la Grève.'

' These risks are my own, Chevalier,' I replied coldly ; ' but pray what Prince is this whom I have the honour of being before ?'

' Your word of honour that you will not mention his name to any one ?'

I gave the promise, laying a hand on my heart.

' Allow me to make known to each other,' said the Chevalier, with somewhat of a mock reverence, ' M. Arthur Blane, of the Garde du Corps Ecossais, and Monseigneur the Prince of Vaudemont.'

' Son of Charles IV of Lorraine !' I exclaimed, aghast.

' The same—Duke Charles, for whom I am governor of the city of La Mothe, and bailiff of Bassignie. Oho ! we have been spending a jovial month in Paris, overhearing and overseeing all King Louis' pretty little preparations for a war upon the Rhine, and we shall be delighted to see you in Lorraine, and all other brave gallants of the Guard. Ma foi ! but we will perfume your new moustaches for you ! To-morrow, or so, will be the grand ceremony of taking the terrible banner of the oriflamme from St. Denis ; but we shall see that too. And now, my dear M. Blane, away to Paris as fast as you may ! You are acting rashly, as others have done before you ; but beware of your game, and that king Louis does not checkmate you ; for this cabinet has more than once led to the Bastille.'

' Thanks, M. d'Ische ; but why do you concern yourself about me ?'

' Because you are a bold fellow, whose hands can keep his

head. But away, I tell you ; in Lorraine we will meet ere long, and try again those little sword-thrusts which we exchanged so awkwardly on the Quai de la Grève.'

'Come with us, monsieur,' said the Prince, a handsome and winning young man, 'we have a fiacre in waiting to take me to Paris. We go to Marion de l'Orme's to-night, disguised as officers of Swiss, and we will set you down at the Pont de Notre Dame.'

'Allons,' said the Chevalier ; 'let us begone then.'

An hour after this, we separated at the bridge of the Seine : they wheeled off to the salons of the most beautiful but most dissipated woman in Paris ; whilst I, glad to be rid of companions so dangerous as the spies and enemies of the King, returned slowly, thoughtfully, and somewhat crest-fallen, to the Louvre.

CHAPTER XV

NICOLA.

AFTER these occurrences, a fortnight elapsed, and during all that time I did not visit the Countess, and I never received any message from her, a circumstance which rather piqued and surprised me ; so, during that fortnight I imitated a little of the dissipation of my companions.

One night Raynold Cheyne and I had a desperate brawl in the Rue St. Honore with the archers of the Provost des Marchands, led by the Chevalier de Guet, or commander of the night watch ; but we knocked them over like nine-pins, and fought our way off. Moreover, in this devilish fortnight, I was involved in no less than two duels, having to fight one for myself and another for a friend.

I had become acquainted with a pretty little actress of the Hotel d'Argent aux Marais, and we used to take occasional rambles together in the Garden of Plants, and have other

meetings, which were duly arranged for us by little Poquelin, the *Molière* of later times. These proceedings one of M. de Treville's musketeers resented so highly, that he asked me to give him a meeting, which I did one morning about five o'clock. Why abroad so early? the reader may ask; but the truth is, that to suit my own convenience I met him on my way *home* to the Louvre. We engaged, but after a few passes he burst into a fit of laughter, sheathed his sword, and proposed that we should toss up for my actress over a bottle of the wine of Artois, which we did accordingly, and, as fortune would have it, she fell to him.

My next affair was more serious.

Our comrade, the Viscount Dundrennan, when crossing at the ferry of the Nesle, was incommoded by a chevalier of St. Esprit, and a meeting was arranged; but the Viscount having to attend an assignation with a little citoyenne, in the Marais, asked me to take his place: and, wearing his rocquelaure and a lofty plume, by which he was as well known in Paris as the statue of Henry IV., I met the chevalier of St. Esprit outside the gate of St. Marcel, and at the fourth pass disarmed and laid him flat on his back by a blow with my shell on the mouth. As he was a friend of Mademoiselle de l'Orme, I feared that for this exploit I might have to coel my heels in Holland, and take service under those very pious and proper persons, the States General; but the Countess stood my friend with the Procureur du Roi, the Chevalier got a false set of teeth, the affair blew over, and Dundrennan was my friend for life.

One night I was sentinel at a private gate of the Louvre, armed completely, in helmet, breast and back plates, with sword and carbine. My orders simply were, to admit none by that postern without receiving from them the parole, which, as already related, the King daily gave to the Marquis de Gordon. In the chapel of the ancient palace, Louis was holding a solemn chapter of the fifty knights of the Holy

Ghost (an order instituted by himself), for the purpose of receiving my friend, Cheyne of Dundargle, whose new honours were owing to the interest taken in his affairs by Madame d'Amboise.

I had still the miniature of that gay countess, and while whistling or humming an air to wile away the lonely two hours of my watch, I occasionally, by a lamp that hung overhead, surveyed this effort of the pencil of Poussin, who had caught with wonderful skill her voluptuous style of beauty, the wanton lustre that shone in her rich hazel eye, and the seductive droop of her eyelash.

Two old crones connected with the palace amused me for some time by gravely discussing whether Madame la Marechale d'Ancre really lodged devils at her house in Paris, and consequently deserved the stake; and then of the newer sorceries of Urbain Grandier among the poor nuns at Loudun, in the Vienne, which began to be much talked of about that time; and as all the ladies were in turn possessed by devils, which were only expelled by bringing them before a statue of our Lady of Recovery, the Carmelites, its possessors, were making quite a fortune by the fame of its miracles. After a little, the two crones shut their windows, and all became still and silent, save the strains of music that came at times from the illuminated windows of the Hôtel de Bourbon, which stood opposite; and now the time approached when the venerable clock of St. Germain l'Auxerrois would toll the hour for relieving me until morning.

A dark figure, about a pistol-shot distant, glided across the rays of light that fell from the Hotel windows towards the postern, and attracted my attention.

‘Qui vive?’ I challenged.

Without replying, a female, masked, and shrouded from head to foot in a long black veil, approached hurriedly, and, to my great surprise, laid a hand timidly upon my arm, saying—

‘Ah! M. Arthur, I overheard some one say you were on duty here.’

‘At your service, mademoiselle,’ I replied, while my heart beat rapidly on recognising my little masker of the Place de la Grève, Nicola, the attendant of the Countess; ‘but why are you alone here, and at this time of night?’

‘Why was I alone that night in the Quai de la Grève?’

‘I know not; you are a charming enigma, Nicola; but twelve will strike shortly. Ah! mademoiselle, if you have a lover!’

‘I have been at the masque in the Hôtel de Bourbon; I have been close to the Cardinal twenty times, and heard him discuss some notable projects with the Chevalier Hepburn and the Duke de Lavalette.’

‘Projects—concerning what?’

‘The war in Lorraine.’

‘Then your information will be of considerable value to my friend, M. le Chevalier d’Ische,’ said I, angrily.

‘Hush!’ said she, haughtily, and with alarm, while she cast a rapid glance over the mighty mass of the Louvre; ‘it is not of d’Ische, but of yourself I came to speak.’

‘A thousand thanks, dear mademoiselle,’ said I, surveying with a new emotion of pleasure her beautiful golden hair, which shone beneath her veil, in the lamp that swung in the archway above me.

She trembled, and said—

‘I know not how to begin all I have to say, but the message comes to you partly from the Chevalier d’Ische, and from the Prince, his companion.’

‘De Vaudemont?’

‘Hush! oh, hush!’ she cried, in a stifled voice; ‘were that name heard here I should be destroyed. Well, monsieur, they are charmed by your courage and bearing.’

‘They do me infinite honour, mademoiselle, no less by the compliment than by the messenger they have chosen; and this message—’

‘Concerns Madame d’Amboise.’

‘Your mistress?’

‘*My mistress*’ reiterated Nicola, with a haughty laugh.

‘Your friend then.’

‘Neither my mistress nor my friend; but one day you may know this enigma. Well, ‘tis of this lady I would speak: M. Blane, you do not love this woman—foolish boy, you cannot love her!’

‘You call me boy, who are but yourself a girl.’

‘A girl? true; but a woman in experience. We begin life early in this lively city of Paris, my dear M. Blane. Can you hope to fix such a heart as that of the Countess?’

‘I dare hope anything,’ said I, as all Clara’s beauty and fascination came before me.

‘Is it worth fixing, a heart that is full of vanity, and finds no charm in religion, or in virtue? You cannot raise this woman to the rank even of a citizen’s wife if you married her.’

‘Married her!’ I reiterated; ‘by my faith, mademoiselle,’ I added, after a long pause of perplexity, ‘you are a bold little chit to speak thus of the Countess—’

‘Of the wretched mistress of Louis XIII.!’ said Nicola, with a gesture of contempt.

‘Marriage was never thought of, by me, at least; on my honour, I assure you, Nicola.’

‘Tis well,’ she replied, with singular dignity; ‘for by that act you would lower yourself for ever, and adopt the stigma of her shame, and of her crimes.’

‘Crimes! oh, mademoiselle, whither is your energy carrying you?’

‘Crimes, or sins, you would soon learn to despise her, while your own purity would render you an object of hate; your youth, as contrasted with her riper years, an object of intolerant jealousy. Avoid her, M. Blane, and love one who is young, beautiful, and worthy of you.’

‘Like yourself, charming Nicola,’ said I, gallantly, and attempting to take her hand; ‘the deuce! you are reading me quite a motherly lecture, little one.’

She blushed under her velvet mask, and drew back, for kindness and earnestness had borne her thus away, and my perhaps mistimed gallantry offended her.

‘Do you not perceive how she receives you? She is always dressing her hair, or reclining on a couch, her neck and shoulders bare; her dress a dishabille. Her eyes are ever rolling, drooping, or languishing, and she courts compliments and kisses, which take the rouge from her cheeks; and thus has she dallied with many before you knew her. Oh, fie! M. Blane, you have been both very naughty, and very silly. There is no love in all this, it is mere allurement. Pure love,’ she added, in her tremulously gentle voice, ‘should be pure and chaste as an infant’s dream.’

‘May such a love be yours, beautiful Nicola!’ said I, struck by the truth of all she advanced, and charmed by the kindness of this interesting girl; ‘I will ever esteem you as my kindest friend.’

‘Money or favour may find you a hundred mistresses, but never a friend. Shameless and intriguing, brilliant and subtle, the Countess seeks only to allure you, as she has allured others, by studied coquetry, and inviting you by a thousand pretty ways to love her; but everything on earth passes away, and so, I trust, will your regard for Madame d’Amboise: her love for you is but the fancy of an hour, and it will pass, leaving perhaps shame, and it may be danger or death behind it.’

I stood for a minute silent, confounded by the lofty bearing, impressed by the sense, and piqued by the monitory tone of this little waiting-maid, whose excessive beauty gave her the privilege of an empress, and, in truth, she seemed quite disposed to take it.

‘Mademoiselle,’ said I, ‘whether all these admonitions have come from the reckless chevalier, or are the pure offspring of your own amiable heart, I shall not be vain enough to determine; but war will fortunately soon remove me from the sphere you deem so dangerous, for to remain in it, and treat

the Countess with real or apparent coldness, would destroy me as readily as if the King discovered her troublesome passion for me.'

' Farewell, M. Blane, I am glad that you see your position so well,' said she, giving me her white hand to kiss ; ' farewell ! remember all I have said ; that I shall ever be your friend, and as a proof that I am well informed, be prepared for a journey—you will leave Paris to-morrow evening !'

' To-morrow ?'

' Farewell !'

' But how will you reach the château ?'

' Antoine awaits me with a fiacre, at the corner of the Rue de l'Arbre Sec.'

' But an escort ?'

' I have the Chevalier d'Ische, and his friend, disguised as Swiss musketeers—adieu !'

' Adieu, dear Nicola !' and we separated.

' Fool that I was not to get a parting kiss from her !' thought I, as she tripped away and disappeared. ' In all this there is some strange mystery ; that young girl is no more a waiting-maid than I am shah of Persia !'

At that moment the clock of St. Germain l'Auxerrois struck twelve, and the Viscount Dundrennan came to take my place at the postern.

' Bravo ! a petticoat !' said he, just as Nicola disappeared ; ' are the sentinels doubled here at night ? I deemed this the most dreary post on the Louvre.'

I made him an answer in the same jocular vein, and rejoined my comrades in the guard-room, or salon of the Garde du Corps Ecossais, and the events of the morrow left but little time for reflection, and less for inquiry.

CHAPTER XVI.

WAR.

WITH dawn next day came an order from M. de la Ferte Imbault, Colonel-General des Ecossais, in the name of the King, for the cuirassiers of the Scottish Guard to march that evening towards Lorraine. Thus did the whispered tidings of Nicola become verified!

During the long war which desolated Germany by the armies of Sweden under Gustavus, Horn, and Banner, and those of the Empire under Tilly, Pappenheim, and the Duke of Friedland, Cardinal Richelieu had ruled France with a rod of iron, and, instead of fighting abroad, contented himself by counteracting the innumerable plots, and rendering abortive the desperate intrigues formed against his government by Mary de Medicis or the Duc d'Orleans, until he conceived the plan of rendering his services as Premier unavoidable, by involving poor Louis XIII. in a war with the formidable empire ; and acting on a hint, some say, from Marion de l'Orme, of whom he was secretly enamoured, he resolved to put his Majesty in possession of Philipsburg, in the fine frontier-province of Alsace.

Exasperated by this wanton and projected usurpation, the Duke of Lorraine, to whom this territory belonged, placed himself under the protection of the German emperor.

Duke Charles IV was esteemed by all, as a brave, generous, and skilful soldier ; he had commanded in the Imperial army at the battle of Prague, and fought the Duke of Saxe-Weimar and Marshal Gustaf Horn at the battle of Nerling. He fought for seven hours in his saddle at the attacks on Poligni and Brissac, and had been more than one hundred times under fire. By his first wife, the Princess Nicola of Lorraine, he had a daughter, Marie-Louise, who was famous

throughout France for her wit, beauty, and accomplishments ; by his second wife he had a son, the Prince de Vaudemont, a tall youth of eighteen years (in after times the Governor of Milan), who had already attained a name for adventurous bravery, and to whom I have twice had the honour of introducing the reader.

Immediately on war being declared against the Empire by Louis, who did it with great formality, by sending, in the ancient fashion, a herald-at-arms to Brussels, the Duke of Lorraine, after victualling and fortifying all his castles, placed strong garrisons in them, and, at the head of eight hundred horse and two thousand foot, joined the Emperor.

The most Christian King was sorely perplexed by all the turmoil and warlike bustle in which he found himself involved ; and he spent more time than ever in the silver and blue boudoir of Madame d'Amboise, or in his dog-kennel at Versailles, while Richelieu, restless, active, and able, enrolled the Arrière Ban, and poured five armies into the field, after laying in the lap of his beautiful monitress the plan of the new campaign, which, he boasted, would carry the frontiers of France far beyond the borders of Champagne and Picardy, and all the outlines of which, the Prince de Vaudemont and the Chevalier d'Ische, disguised as abbés, or musketeers, had heard freely discussed in the salons of Paris, and duly transmitted to the Duke and to the Emperor.

The oriflamme was taken from the Abbey of St. Denis ; in a week, the whole country vibrated with war ; all the troops in France were concentrated at five points, and on the march.

The first army, under the Dukes d'Angoulême and De la Force, marched towards Lorraine, and assailed the troops of Duke Charles, under the terrible John de Wert, and stormed St. Michel and other places.

The second, led by the Duke de Rohan, after fortifying many places in the Valteline, had a desperate conflict near Bormio, and defeated Serbellon with the loss of five thousand men.

The third, twenty-six thousand strong, led by the Marechal Duke de Crecqui, entered Italy, laid siege to Valenza, and stormed the castle of Fontana, when the gallant Marechal de Thoiras was slain in the assault.

The fourth, under the Marechals de Brezé and Chatillon (who had still the garter of Mademoiselle de Guerchi tied to his sword-arm), entered Picardy, attacked Prince Thomas of Savoy, and defeated him with the loss of five thousand slain, taking fifteen hundred men, ninety-five standards, and sixteen brass guns.

The fifth was led by the Cardinal Duke de Lavalette and Camp-Marechal Sir John Hepburn of Athelstaneford, in Lothian, who had then the proud pre-eminence of being esteemed “THE BRAVEST SOLDIER IN THE WORLD;” and it is of this army alone I shall treat, for, in its ranks, I had the honour to serve against the veterans of the Empire and the high-spirited chevaliers of the house of Lorraine.

In this army were the ancient regiments of Piedmont, Normandy, Navarre, and Picardy, styled *les vieilles bandes*. The latter corps was six thousand strong, and led by Louis de Bethune, Duc de Charost. We had also the younger corps, La Tour du Pin, Bourbonnais, Auvergne, Belsunce, Meilly, and the distinguished regiment du Roi. Then we had also the Scottish regiments of Ramsay, Lesly, and Hepburn; the latter was seven thousand strong; the other Scots regiments were about five thousand each. We had with us a fine train of artillery and a body of cavalry, the flower of which were the gendarmerie, all clad in coats of scarlet, richly laced with cuirasses and helmets; the light horse of the Guard, consisting of two hundred gallant gentlemen of Navarre, and the hundred cuirassiers of the Scottish Guard, who were second to none in the world. Our foot company remained in Paris to guard the King. All the horse had triple-barred cabossets, back and breast pieces, iron gloves, buff coats, and jack-boots. The infantry had nearly

laid aside defensive armour, or it was worn by their officers alone ; their uniforms were white, richly faced and laced.

We had with us the heavy dragoons of Marechal de Brissac, commanded by Roger de St. Lacy, for whom the charming Mademoiselle de Chevreuse had recently obtained a coronet, with the title of Duc de Bellegarde, and thus he carried her glove on his helmet. These dragoons were wont to boast that they “were the *Scots* of the French army.”

In France, I often found the high chivalric bearing of the noblesse clouded by a lofty imperiousness towards inferiors—a bearing unknown to us in Scotland, where all men went abroad armed, and where the ties of kin and clanship gave the peer and the peasant a community of name and blood. In France, none but men of ‘good birth’ were permitted to wear a sword ; in Scotland, every man went armed to the teeth. On attaining his fifteenth year, the son of the French noble was ceremoniously conducted to church, accoutred with belt and sword ; his parents preceded him with lighted tapers to the altar, where the priest, at the offertory, took the weapon from his boyish hand, and, after a solemn consecration, returned it to the youth, who did not sheath it until the conclusion of mass, after which he was entitled to wear it in peace and war, as a badge of rank and honour. Such were the ideas impressed in boyhood on the young French nobles ; hence their spirit was matchless—their military honour unblemished.

It was on a warm and sunny day of spring when we bade farewell to the gay and beautiful city of Paris, and with all our trumpets sounding and kettle-drums beating a lively Scottish air ; with our long swords gleaming around the Cardinal Duke de Lavalette, whose escort we formed, the hundred cuirassiers of the Garde du Corps Ecossais took the road to Lorraine, thousands sending their cheers and prayers after us, while hundreds of pretty girls strewed the way before us with the early flowers of the summer that was at hand—the summer that many of us might never live to see.

It was evening when we defiled through the barriers, and I remembered with surprise how true the warning of the pretty Nicola had proved.

‘M. le Cardinal,’ asked the King, as the troops marched from Paris, ‘how are all these armies to be victualled?’

‘That is the enemy’s affair, sire—not ours,’ was the reply of the imperturbable Richelieu.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE MARCH.

THE army of Lavalette covered all the roads that led towards Lorraine, and the aspect of the column to which our Scottish cuirassiers were attached was brilliant and imposing as it poured through the pastoral province of Champagne, with corslets and cabossets gleaming in the sun, and all their bright points glittering, their plumes and banners waving among the brigades of pikemen and musketeers, dragoons, artillery, baggage, and trains of pontooners and petardiers.

After traversing a spacious plain we crossed the Marne at Meaux, which made a march of thirty-two miles. This was severe enough for heavily-armed cavalry, so we halted all next day and heard Father Gilbert Blackhall, a Scottish Jesuit, preach in the cathedral of St. Stephen. Continuing our march we passed Colomiers (which was soon after to be made a peerage for Henry of Orleans, Duke of Longoville) and La Ferte sous Jouarre, which lies in a narrow valley twelve miles eastward of it. We crossed the river by an old wooden bridge, and our captain, the Marquis de Gordon, took up his quarters in the ancient castle, which had been burned by the Huguenots in 1562, in those days when religion and rapine, slaughter and conversion went hand in hand; and ere long our trumpets made the old ruined streets of

Sezanne—which was still half in ashes, just as the Huguenots had left it in the days of Charles IX.—resound as they blew the *cavalquet* in the market-place. The town is prettily situated between two small rivers, and having a good market for corn, wine, and wood, formed a convenient halting-place, and here we remained for three days by the advice of our Marechal de Logis.

We carried little baggage. Our horses were well inured to fatigue, and had been kept constantly in condition by drilling, marching, and galloping at full speed by squadrons. On these occasions rider and horse were always fully armed and accoutred; thus all our movements became characterized by unusual spirit and velocity.

I thought frequently of the Countess, from whom I was now completely separated; but being beyond the sphere and fascination of her presence, my regret was not *very* poignant. Then the softer and gentle image of Nicola would come before me.

‘Pshaw!’ thought I; ‘a little intriguing waiting-maid—absurd!'

On the march towards Sezanne we passed hundreds of French stragglers, who had sunk under fatigue and lay by the wayside; but never a Scottish musketeer of Ramsay, Hepburn, or Lesly left his colours, though their regiments composed half our force of infantry; but our Scots have naturally the gift of enduring fatigue, and the *habit* of marching—for it is a habit which other soldiers have generally to acquire.

‘Well,’ said the Viscount Dundrennan, shrugging his shoulders, as we received our billets on the bourgeoisie; ‘I suppose, M. le Maire, you have neither a theatre or other place of entertainment here?’

‘At this distance from Paris, M. le Gend’arme, I should think not! but,’ he added, with a twinkle in his eye—for this paunchy magistrate and wine-merchant was an old Huguenot—‘there is a pretty convent of Ursulines on the height yonder’

‘Indeed !’

‘Yes, monsieur.’

‘A convent?’

‘A charming little place, monsieur ; the walls are covered with roses—’

‘Ah ! to conceal the broken bottles and iron spikes below, I suppose.’

‘Yes, monsieur,’ said the Maire, grinning and bowing.

‘Say *monseigneur*, M. le Maire ; you are addressing a Viscount,’ said the Chevalier Livingstone ; and the magistrate bowed thrice to his red garters.

‘There is a piece of the true cross there,’ he added, with his impudent smile, ‘in a golden shrine that cost a thousand louis d’ors, and the abbess is only four-and-twenty years old, while there is not a novice over sixteen.’

‘Tête Dieu !’ exclaimed the Chevalier ; ‘do you say so ?’

‘Not one over sixteen, messieurs, and all high born and beautiful.’

‘By the devil’s death, I shall visit them,’ said Dundrennan, putting his foot in his stirrup ; ‘I must see all these pretty ones, hap what may.’

‘But how ?’ I asked.

‘Viscount, you are mad !’ exclaimed Cheyne and others.

‘How so, gentlemen ?’ said he, mounting ; ‘I am the grandson of a commendator.’

‘The devil !’ exclaimed the Chevalier, laughing ; ‘dost think the nuns will esteem you the more for that ?’

‘But how will you enter ?’ I asked.

‘Tis very simple. I fall sick at the gate or am thrown from my horse, and the sympathizing abbess, the kind nuns and pretty little novices, carry me in ; they remove my helmet—they bathe my temples with perfumes, and with their own soft hands, and thus the fortress is taken by stratagem.’

‘Beware, Viscount, I beseech you,’ said I ; ‘such pranks may bring you to the Bastille.’

‘Viscount, you are incorrigible!’ said Sir Quentin Home.

‘Ten crowns to one, you don’t get entrance,’ said the reckless Chevalier Livingstone.

‘You shall see, gentlemen—my ten crowns are won,’ cried the madcap Viscount, as he galloped away with all his brilliant accoutrements flashing in the sun; and the waggish maire rubbed his hands with glee, as he saw him cross the bridge and ascend the height on which the sequestered convent stood.

In an hour he rejoined us, looking rather grave and a little ashamed of himself and of his prank.

‘How about our little bet?’ asked Livingstone.

‘You have lost, Chevalier,’ said Dundrennan; ‘so order dinner for us all at the hotel.’

He had fully succeeded; but the nuns proved to be all old women; there was not a novice in the house, and the abbess was in her sixty-seventh year. She was a lady of noble and magnificent presence, and on discovering her visitor to be a gentleman of the Scottish Guard, announced herself to be Mary Stuart—that mysterious nun who was then so well known in France as the Mother of Resurrection, and who was openly affirmed to be the daughter of the wicked Earl of Bothwell, and the unhappy Mary Queen of Scots—born in Lochleven, and kidnapped to France—a descent also claimed by an eminent divine in Scotland.

She had received the Viscount kindly, gracefully, and told him who she was supposed to be; and he returned to us, in a more sober mood than we had seen him in for many a day.

During our halt, the convent parlour was thronged by the gentlemen of the Scottish forces; and our illustrious Camp-Marechal Hepburn presented to the abbess a valuable gold medal, which, in the German wars, he had torn from the neck of the terrible Count Pappenheim, the hero of a hundred wounds.

Weary with marching in all our harness, half choked

by the spring dust, that rolled along the roads of Upper Champagne, under the feet of so many thousand infantry, and the wheels of many powder-waggons, baggage-wains, and field-pieces, just as the sun was setting, we gladly halted one evening, in the little town of La Fere Champenoise, and resigned our horses to our grooms, servants, or pages.

As we rambled along the streets in search of refreshment, the welcome voice of a tapster, shouting to passengers in the old fashion, drew us towards a tavern or hostelry.

‘Messieurs,’ he continued to cry, ‘we have here good wine and good oats! will you have a chopin for yourself and a measure for your charger? enter, messieurs, enter!’

This tavern was styled the *Count of Champagne*, from its sign-board, which bore an imaginary head of that personage in a barbed helmet of the middle ages; and from the circumstance of the quaint old house having been a residence of Theobauld V., last Count of Champagne and Brie; consequently our tavern was quite historical, and at least four hundred years old.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE TWO ABBÉS.

DUNDRENNAN, Sir Quintin Home, Raynold Cheyne and I, entered the common hall, or room of the tavern, and after bowing politely to two abbés who were seated in a corner conversing over a stoup of French wine, and reading the columns of the ‘Mercury,’ we ordered dinner.

‘A poor tavern this,’ said Sir Quentin, surveying the old gloomy room and worm-eaten furniture.

‘True; but our swords are sheathed in leather just now—not crimson velvet,’ said the Viscount, pithily.

‘That ride from Mailly to-day has given me an appetite,’ said Cheyne; ‘dinner—dinner, quick! ’

‘ And jovial stoups of your wine of champagne all round,’ added Sir Quentin.

‘ What the deuce, my Laird of Redden !’ exclaimed the Viscount, ‘ thy purse actually rings with the sound of metal ; hast thou inherited a fortune ?’

‘ Or been upon the highway ?’ added Cheyne, in the same tone of banter.

‘ I have been overmuch upon the highway since I rid myself of yonder English captain in the bounds of Berwick,’ replied the Baronet, with a grim smile ; ‘ since that unfortunate day, my purse has usually been the lightest thing about me.’

‘ Except thy heart, gallant Home,’ added Dundrennan.

‘ Viscount, I thank you.’

‘ And yet, Sir Quentin,’ said I, ‘ rumour avers that the fair Mademoiselle de Chevreuse views you with favour, and we all know that she has eighty thousand francs per annum.’

‘ Eighty thousand ! Ah, Heaven ! think of that !’ sighed the poor Baronet ; ‘ if she were tenderly inclined, mademoiselle might make me the happiest man in France, and her paternal coat would look very well when quartered with the lion rampant of Home *argent* armed and langued *gules*.’

‘ But think of De Guerchi, whose heart might break, though Chatillon wears her garter.’

‘ Pshaw ! is not one pretty girl as good as another, Viscount ?’

‘ If their purses be of the same weight.’

‘ Of course, Viscount. Ouf ! how mercenary we have become among these Parisians. But beware, gentlemen, we have a couple of abbés here,’ said Home, lowering his voice, and to mention my name with that of Mademoiselle de Chevreuse in their hearing might bring upon me the eyes of monseigneur the Archbishop of Paris ; and there are certain devilish contrivances in France known as *lettres*

de cachet, which lead to an unpleasant place called the Bastille.'

'Ten devils!' said the Viscount; 'don't think of them.'

'The archbishop was a capital swordsman when he was known simply as the little Abbé Gondi; but I have no wish to measure swords or strength with him now.'

'Here comes the dinner at last,' said Dundrennan, flinging aside his belt and gauntlets; 'bravo, maître d'hôtel! are all these fine children yours?'

'Tush, Viscount, don't ask unpleasant questions,' said Cheyne, still in his spirit of banter; 'they are, at least, the children of his wife, Madame la Comtesse de Champagne, our generous lady of the signboard.'

And so, amid gaiety and laughter, heedless of the two reverend abbés who sat in the corner, we sat down to dinner.

It was then the custom in France, when one was invited to dinner, to send a servant with one's knife, fork, and spoon, as these things were never provided for guests. We all produced our apparatus from our pockets, and attacked the viands, as we would have done the enemy.

The two abbés, who had been quite silent since we entered the room, now began to talk while our jaws were otherwise employed; but as they invariably became silent when any of us spoke, and sat in shadow, with their faces turned from us, I conceived, without knowing why, an instinctive mistrust of their character, and watched them narrowly. One was dark in complexion; the other fair, and ten years younger in face and manner; but the knowledge that the costume of an *abbé* was t'en the usual attire, or disguise of French gentlemen when travelling, rendered me wary of drawing attention to their presence, or to their conversation, the scraps of which were somewhat to the following effect.

'She is very lovely, with her violet eyes and golden hair,' said the younger abbé; 'Marie Louise herself is not superior to her!'

‘Ah, you know her, then—this Madame de Charost?’ asked the elder and darker abbé.

‘Too well for my own peace ; but you smile.’

‘She is one of the most faithful wives in Paris.’

‘To her husband?’

‘No, to his dear friend——’

‘Diable ! who is he?’

‘Ah, your hand wanders to where your sword should be. There is great wisdom in consigning these tools to the tapster, when we visit a tavern.’

‘But who is this friend?’

‘The new camp-master of the regiment de Normandie.’

‘The Marquis de Toneins, son of the Duke de la Force?’

‘Yes.’

‘Good,’ said the fair abbé, angrily ; ‘I shall remember that when we meet again. Ah, poor little Charost—she is indeed an innocent !’

‘Yes, a pretty innocent, who sings comic operas, and reads romances in Lent,’ whispered the older abbé, in his bantering tone.

Deeming this conversation about the gay and divorced Duchess of Charost rather odd in its tenor to be maintained by two churchmen, I now gave all my attention to them.

‘Mon Dieu ! and so you actually fought a duel with this young spark De Toneins?’ exclaimed the dark abbé.

‘Yes, because duelling being strictly forbidden in the camp, we fought about everything ; even the peccadilloes of the girls at the Hôtel d’Argent, or about who was the best hand with cards, a case of pistols, anything in short. But he fairly ran me through the body.’

‘I think you have a luck that way. Ouf ! after this, I would have paid a priest to curse him.’

‘Bah !’ replied the fair abbé, with a bitter smile, ‘I can do it cheaper myself.’

'True,' replied the other, and while drumming with his fingers on the table, hummed half-abstractedly—

'Fille d'un simple pelletier,
Elle était gentillette ;
Robert en galant chevalier
Vint lui conter fleurette.'

This song, together with the voice, stirred an immediate chord in my memory; and while pretending to examine certain pictures of farriers' shops, riding-houses, and Dutch market-places, by Albert Kuyp, with which the room was decorated, I drew near the two reverend abbés, and observed them more particularly; and despite their perukes, in imitation of the inventor, the absurd Abbé la Riviere, I recognised in the elder and darker, the devil-may-care Chevalier Raoul d'Ische; and in the younger and fair-haired, the Prince of Vaudemont, the son of that Duke of Lorraine, whose territories we were about to enter.

Perplexity and astonishment at the cool daring of these two cavaliers kept me silent; and they continued to converse without observing me.

'You are right,' said the Prince, in reply to some remark of the Chevalier; 'the risks run by Marie Louise, whose beauty and delicacy render her so suspiciously attractive, are a source of great unhappiness to me.'

'But her presence in Paris is as necessary to us, as twenty thousand men upon the frontier,' replied the Chevalier, in the same low, guarded tone. 'The Countess—'

'What Countess?'

'Madame d'Amboise. You have read and destroyed her last despatch from Paris, I hope?'

'Yes, Chevalier; and deposited the answer.'

'Where, M. le Prince?'

'In the place agreed upon; the old oak at the fountain on the highway; 'tis, as usual, in ciphers, which she of course alone can read, having the key. Moreover—'

‘ Hush, *M. l’Abbé*—we are observed.’

‘ Then let us retire.’

They rose abruptly and withdrew ; but this unguarded conversation convinced me more than ever that the famous Princess Marie Louise of Lorraine was living concealed in Paris ; that the mistress of the King was betraying both him and Richelieu, and, being a Lorrainer, was in the interest of Duke Charles and his people.

‘ Comrades, excuse me for a minute,’ said I, and followed these Lorrainers, whom I found in the act of receiving their swords from the tapster, and mounting their horses, which were strong and active nags, accoutred with valises and holster-pistols.

‘ Monseigneur,’ said I, saluting the Prince, ‘ I have discovered you ; indeed I must have been blind or mad, had I failed to do so.’

‘ Hola ! upon my soul, ’tis our very good friend, *M. Blane of Garde Ecossais* !’ said the Chevalier, with as much surprise as if he had not been observing me for an hour past. ‘ Well, sir ?’

‘ Retire—leave our vicinity ; this espionage is not honourable, and you trust me too far.’

‘ Ah ! you begin to threaten us—eh ?

‘ If, in one hour hence, I find you near our cantonments, by Heaven, messieurs, I will denounce you both to the Duke de la Lavalette !’

‘ Mort de tout les diables ! he *does* threaten us, Chevalier,’ said the Prince, haughtily. ‘ Very well, *M. Blane*, I command my father’s troops at Bitche, the first town upon the Alsatian frontier : you will find me there in other guise than that of an *abbé*.’

‘ And if you pass Bitche with bones unbroken, and come the length of La Mothe,’ added the Chevalier, ‘ you will find *me* there, with my helmet on, my young soldier. I shall then be at the head of Duke Charles’s old steel crabs, whose claws

are sharp enough, believe me—and so till then, adieu, my dear Garde Ecossais.'

' Adieu, messieurs,' said I, and we separated with cold salutes.

They galloped away, and I rejoined my three companions, who were singing vociferously an old Scottish rant, and becoming more jolly than ever, over the sparkling wine of Champagne.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE CAMPAIGN IN ALSACE.

OUR next day's march brought us to Vitry le Francois, a walled town, built of wood. Here we crossed the Marne; the cavalry by a ford, the infantry and artillery by boats and floats; and here a singular episode occurred.

As the soldiers of the seventh battalion of Camp-Marechal Hepburn's regiment of Scots were crossing, a boat full of them overturned; a musketeer, in the confusion and dismay of the moment, grasped a woman who sat next him, believing she was his wife, and swam ashore with her. On reaching the bank, he turned joyfully to embrace her; when, lo! he found that he had saved the wife of another, and left his own, with her babe, to perish in the river, which swept most of these unfortunates away, to drown among the boats and barges, mud and slime, below the ford. The poor soldier, in the first impulse of his grief and despair, threw himself into the stream again, and being heavily armed and accoutred, sank like a stone, though the Laird of Tushielaw, one of our cuirassiers, made a brave attempt to save him.

We were now in Lorraine—the country of the enemy, and our troops began to plunder in every direction; yet we saw little fighting for some days. As for the plunder, it was the fashion of war in France.

‘A little legitimate contribution,’ the Chevalier Living-stone called it; ‘M. le Cardinal would have us to pay for everything here, as we would in the Rue St. Honoré!’

On entering Toul, which until 1550 had been a free city of the German empire, the hundred cuirassiers were the advanced guard of the army; and here I was detailed as one of a foraging-party under the old Marechal de Logis. As the people treated us scurvily, we foraged with such enthusiasm, that with cocked pistols we ransacked bureaux and boxes, as well as barns and pantries; and some of our men realised a very pretty sum. The aspect of our Marechal de Logis, dark, weather-beaten, scaled all over in an old suit of James V’s time, and whiskered like a seahorse, made the poor Lorrainers yield up the best of everything in the name of king Louis.

‘Always take plunder and provender when they are to be had,’ was his maxim; ‘for in war, we know not when an evil day may come. By Jove, sirs! when I was besieged in Ulm, with old Velt-Marechal Ruthven, I ate more rats than any old tom-cat; for provisions were short, and the wine being bad, it always flew to my head; because it is an empty place, and clear of brain, you young fellows may think; but your own will be light enough when you have soldiered as long as old Patrick Gordon. Forward, my foragers!—hack and manger and spare not!’

On leaving the fertile valley, where the quaint old city of Toul clusters by the bank of the blue Moselle, surrounded by a chain of hills, that are covered to their summits by teeming vineyards, green foliage, and fertility—on leaving it, we took the road direct to Strasbourg and the Rhine, every night engirding our camp and cantonments with strong out-picquets, as we drew nearer the vicinity of the foe.

On the 16th of March, we passed close to the strongly-fortified city of Nanci, the crooked and narrow, quaint and dark streets of which stand in the centre of a beautiful plain; and we Scots thought it worth a month’s ~~cost~~ to see old Ramsay’s

regiment, five thousand strong, marching through its thoroughfares in column, with all their drums and fifes making their echo to the ‘East Neuk o’ Fife,’ the liveliest of all our quick steps.

We had now marched two hundred and thirty miles from Paris.

The French out-piquet, on the road to our front, alarmed the whole army one night, by firing at a mysterious object which hovered before them in the dark. A party of M. de Brissac’s dragoons were ordered out to patrol; but as they always required a long time to grease and blacken their boots and mustachios, Dundrennan, Home, Livingstone, and I galloped forward to ascertain the cause of alarm; and discovered an old cow, riddled with bullets, lying on the roadway. By this time the whole army were under arms, thinking the Imperialists were upon us; and there was no small amount of laughter and grumbling at those young soldiers—*vieilles moustaches*—who caused such a disturbance. The cow we gave to our fourrier-major, and her colllops were all simmering in the camp-kettles, long before our trumpets blew à cheval again.

As it neither suited our service, nor the policy of the time to be absent from church, we were marched to the great cathedral, where we saw mass celebrated with great pomp and ceremony. Many of our reformed Scots shrugged their shoulders, and knitted their brows; but the Marquis de Gordon, who came of a Catholic house, whispered to me,—

‘Is it not a sad thing, M. Blane—sad to *me*, at least—to see a hundred gentlemen of the Scottish Guard mere spectators here—strangers before that altar, for which so many of their fathers bent the knee in peace, and laid down their lives in war?’

‘My mother’s house were Lollards of Kyle,’ said I.

Vic, with its old ruined castle of the twelfth century; the marshy plain of Marsal; the little town of Dieuse, and the sedgy banks of the Sielle, were all rapidly passed, without a

shot being exchanged ; and now we approached the land of strong castles and barrier-towns, as we entered Alsace, a German circle of the Upper Rhine, which was not ceded to France until 1648, prior to which year it belonged to the house of Swabia, who were styled Dukes of Alsace. Here, at a village in which we were quartered, I first tasted that vintage, peculiar to the province, named the *stroh*, or straw wine ; and here we found, that which proved much less pleasant, the bravest of Duke Charles's troops, combined with some of the chosen and hardy *lanzknechts* of the Empire, garrisoning all the fortresses that lay between us and the famed Rhine.

Cardinal de Lavalette, who commanded us, was a son of the famous Duc d'Eperton, and was particularly an adherent and friend of Cardinal Richelieu. With Sir John Hepburn, he had under his bâton, another Camp-Marechal, the Viscount de Turenne, whose military genius and brilliant valour rendered him almost the equal of that great cavalier whom a cannon-shot at the siege of Zaberne was to send prematurely to his grave.

The general of the Imperialists was Mathias Count Gallas, a native of Trent, whose reputation and long career of severe and successful service, rendered him a formidable antagonist to the young Cardinal, whose army was to act in conjunction with the Swedes under the Duke of Saxe-Weimar, and to add Alsace to the new conquests of France, whose frontier Richelieu had sworn should be the Rhine.

Though Count Gallas had been guilty of great cruelty in Saxony, the brilliance of his achievements in Bohemia, the skill with which he invested Lauff, and pushed the siege of Mantua, and the greatness of mind he displayed in releasing old Count Thurn, because he would not see a brave enemy perish on the scaffold, together with his fine order of battle at Nordlingen, had gained him such a reputation, that the veteran General Leganez, exclaimed,

‘The best officer in the world might learn something from Gallas !’

His head-quarters were now at Worms, from whence he sent out strong detachments to ravage all the country and capture the places still held by the Swedes, before they could be joined by their new allies the French. He stormed Keizar-Loutar; invested Deux-Ponts; and after forcing Count Mansfeldt’s lines before Mentz, threw supplies into the city, and thus stood matters when our army halted on the frontier of Alsace.

Having heard from our spies that a thousand of Gallas’ cavalry horses were at grass in a verdant hollow near Ing-wieler, a little town on the Motter, a tributary of the Rhine, I conceived the idea of decoying, and bringing them all to La-valette’s head-quarters. Full of ardour and enthusiasm, I burned for an opportunity to distinguish myself; and accustomed as I had been to border picqueering and foraging, it seemed an expedition adapted to my skill and capacity. Sir Quentin Home and Lord Dundrennan (they were a pair of inseparables), Raynold Cheyne of Dundargle, the Chevalier, Tushielaw, and another spirit equally reckless, insisted on accompanying me; and on obtaining permission from the Marquis our captain, and from Camp-Marechal Hepburn, we prepared at once to put our scheme in force—quietly and deliberately as we would have done in other days to cross the English frontier, and drive home the fatted beeves of the western wardenrie.

‘War is full of rules for practice Mr. Blane,’ said the Marquis, as he gave me leave; ‘yet it is without any fixed principle; so in this bold stratagem, I trust entirely to your per-spicacity, your discernment, and bravery.’

I bowed, and with a beating heart hurried to my tent. I was most anxious that this attempt should be successful, for the eyes of all in the camp were on us, and on me in particular. Our rendezvous was the tent of the Marquis.

THE DECOY.

‘ I shall be punctual,’ said Cheyne, when I explained my plans.

‘ Thanks, Raynold, and you Viscount, and Home?’

‘ We will be punctual as night or death,’ said the wild Laird of Redden with his grim smile as we separated.

By my direction seven suits of clothes like those worn by the Croats of Gallas were procured for us. Under their tight jackets we wore our back and breast plates. We invested our nether-persons in wide red pantaloons, which ended in ankle-boots; we put on thick fur caps, and arming ourselves with crooked sabres, daggers, and six pairs of loaded pistols each, (two in the holsters and four in the girdle,) after practising to whoop and to scream, we found ourselves turned into very respectable Croats of whom the Ban himself might have been proud. We chose active little horses, and after meeting at the tent of the Marquis, departed from the camp at sunset, followed, about a mile in our rear, by fifty of the light horse, who were led by the young Marquis de Toneins, and were to cover our retreat, and if necessary aid the attempt.

CHAPTER XX.

THE DECOY.

A RIDE of some miles brought us to a valley overshadowed by steep black mountains. The darkness had set in, and a waning moon, diminished to a crescent, peeped coldly above the shoulder of a rocky hill, pale, sharp, and keen. Over this grassy hollow, which was less than a mile in extent, we could see the chargers to the number of a thousand, at least, quietly at grass; and just as the troop of light horse concealed themselves in a thicket, a fire was seen to flash and burn brightly on the brow of the rocky hill. This marked the post of the Imperialist guard who had charge of the steeds in the valley.

Scattered among them we could distinguish a number of the enemy's dragoons in foraging dress.

Riding furiously with short stirrups, and in that wild and tumultuous fashion peculiar to the Croatian troopers, we succeeded in deceiving and passing two advanced sentinels; and on making a circuit of the little valley, we got *between* the scattered horses and the guard which protected them.

'Now, gentlemen, now is our time to drive the prey!' said I, in a loud whisper.

'Hah, Viscount,' cried Home, whose eyes flashed with excitement, "'tis a touch of the old times this!'

'True, Sir Quentin,' added young Scott of Tushielaw; 'and in gude faith, sirs, I could almost fancy this hollow a scroggy glen on the southern slope of the Cheviots; yonder gorge, by which we have come, the Pass of Carter-bar; and all these Austrian nags, a herd of well-fed English kye.'

'Hush, sirs,' said I; 'be wary, be wary, and remember my directions.'

'Of course,' said Dundrennan; 'I never trust horses or women, as both are apt to grow skittish on occasions; so wary we must be.'

'Let us scatter now,' said I; 'and when I fire a pistol, dash on and drive the prey.'

'Bravo!'

'Hurrah!'

'Vivat Rex!' were the exclamations of my six reckless comrades, all of whom were well acquainted with what they had to do, and drew off about twenty yards from each other. The moment I fired my pistol, an immediate commotion took place among the horses; all those that were lying on the ground sprang to their feet; and all that were grazing lifted their heads, pricked up their ears, and prepared to fly *from* the direction in which the sound came.

Now with loud shouts, firing all our pistols (we could give forty two shots amongst us), and brandishing our crooked

sabres, we rode furiously to the right and left in a half circle, but always advancing however, and driving before us the startled herd of horses, which all rushed tumultuously like a living flood, with their heads and hind legs in the air, towards the lower end of the valley, the route we wished them to pursue. Thus, in a moment, the whole mass were in motion, and we rode *along with them*, decoying and driving them on, treading down and trampling under hoof the few dismounted men whom we had seen scattered among them ; some of these we pistolled or sabred as we spurred furiously forward, alternately leading or driving, and hallooing madly ; for to us it seemed the wildest of sport, smiting with the flat, or pricking with the point of our sabres any nag that seemed disposed to loiter, or not to follow the leader, for Tushielaw rode in front, guiding all the fugitives towards our camp.

The Imperial Guard at the upper end of the valley were bewildered, and fired recklessly into the dark ; while an Austrian sentinel, who placed himself right in the centre of our path, with his cocked musket nearly shot Lord Dundrennan, who by one stroke clove his Spanish beaver, with the iron calotte which he wore under it, and slew him in a moment.

The whole stratagem and seizure were most successful ; and without receiving a scar among us, we decoyed the entire herd of horses into the narrow gorge between the mountains. Sir Quentin Home was in extasy at the success of our scheme ; and his aspect in the Croatian dress was peculiarly wild as he came furiously up to my side. He had the reins of his bridle in his teeth, together with his dagger ; and guiding his horse by both knees, levelled in each hand a cocked pistol.

The chevalier kept his ramrod in his teeth, to reload his pistols more rapidly ; and now when we drew up for this purpose, and to recover breath, we were fully two miles from the valley of Ingweiler. Now the light horse of M. de Toneins wheeled up from the thicket, and assisted us to hem the horses more completely into a narrow way between hedges

and walls, where, after half-an-hour's anxious delay, the who suffered themselves to be taken without difficulty, and w threw over their heads the bridloons and stall-collars or halter with which we were amply provided. These were afterward buckled together, linking all the horses into little troops ; and these riderless ranks were each led by a trooper in the centre

In an incredibly short space of time all were ready, not . horse was lost ; and we departed at full speed for the camp This affair was rather disastrous for the enemy ; for amon^s the horses at grass were several which belonged to a foraging party. These, by the alarm or example of others, broke from their picquets, threw down both riders and trusses, and, by this more than fifty men were trampled under foot, as we afterwards read in the *Gullobelgicus*.

The whole decoy was ably and skilfully managed ; bu we had just effected our retreat in time, for the Austrian cuirassier regiments of Goetz and Gordon, with six pieces o cannon, despatched by Count Gallas, had almost overtaken w when we reached our camp on the frontier of Alsace. But thi was not the only service I had the honour to perform before we advanced further into that province.

Hearing that the enemy had stored up a quantity of provisions at Phalsbourg, a little town that lies at the foot of a mountain on the borders of Lorraine, and gives a title to a principality, I offered, if twenty of Brissac's dragoons were lent to me, to make a dash at the provender, of which my comrades of the Guard were rather short. This I also accomplished, and, at the sword's point, procured them fifteen waggons of dry and green forage ; so that we once more had the Marechal de Logis' allowance of twenty pounds of hay ten pounds of oats, and five pounds of straw per diem for each cuirassier.

Moreover, in this night's onfall, we spiked two brass field-pieces, blew up the tumbrils, slew seven of the Emperor's own regiment of Petardiers, and partly burned the town.

'These two exploits procured me the special notice of the Duke de Lavalette, and of one whose admiration I valued much more—my countryman, the great Sir John Hepburn of Athelstaneford, on whom the eyes of all France and Sweden were turning, as being in all probability the successor of his late master, Gustavus Adolphus, in the arduous struggle with the Empire ; a hope in which they were doomed to be fatally disappointed by his premature death.

He offered me a lieutenancy in his regiment ; but, being urged by Dundrennan, and flattered by the Marquis our captain, I thanked him, and begged leave to remain with my comrades of the Guard.

CHAPTER XXI.

A CHARGE OF THE SCOTTISH GUARD.

WE came in sight of Bitche on the morning of the 25th March, which was still in that year (1634), *New Year's-day* in England ; though the governments of Scotland and of France altered that festival to the 1st of January in 1599, during the reigns of James VI. and Charles IX.

We were with the advanced guard of cavalry, which consisted of the dragoons of Marshal Brissac and the light horse of the Guard, two hundred Navarrese chevaliers, the pride of Henry the Great ; and as the Marquis de Gordon, who commanded the whole, understood that a strong force lay in Bitche, he halted, reconnoitred, and bivouacked as the night had set in and our main body had not yet come up.

We slept overnight in our cloaks, under a chill dew, at the heads of our horses, which remained fully accoutred, unbitted, and ready for action at a moment's notice—a fortunate precaution ; for with the first pale streak of dawn, when all were weary, cold, and shivering, I was roused by the bracing cry of--

‘Aux armes ! à cheval !’ and *to horse !* blew all our trumpets, while the long roll of the ‘Scottish march,’ beaten sharply on the drum, rang along the far-extended lines of Hepburn, Lesly, and Ramsay. And now a body of imperial cavalry, the old-whiskered reitres, and German lanzknechts of the Empire, accoutréed in black iron and buff leather, with lance, arquebuse, and espadone, appeared in dark masses and in solid squadron, about a thousand strong, on the narrow road that lay direct to Bitche.

The latter, a little town on the Alsatian frontier, which gave the title of count to a gentleman of the house of Lorraine, stands upon a rock, and was deemed impregnable. Beyond it rose the sombre masses of the Vosges mountains, around the peaks of which the morning mist was wreathing and curling upward—golden, white, and purple in the rising sun ; and on the highest towers of the old and dun-coloured citadel waved the white flag, bearing the black eagle of the Empire, and the yellow banner with the three blue wings of Lorraine.

As the artillery had not yet come up, the cavalry were to open a passage for the infantry through these Imperialists ; and to us was reserved the honour of attacking the enemy’s cavalry if our comrades failed, for it has been a maxim in war since the days of Julius Cæsar to keep the best troops in reserve.

With loud shouts of ‘ Navarre ! Navarre !’ the glittering light horse of the Guard swept forward to the attack, in two heavy squadrons of fifty chevaliers abreast, with the royal standard, three fleur-de-lis *or* in a field *azure*, advanced above their bright helmets, their swords uplifted, and their white ostrich plumes streaming behind them. There was a lowering of lances along the German line ; a flashing of pistols ; a fierce shock, and rolling of men and horses upon the green turf or dusty road ; and, with a shout of rage and defiance, the chevaliers of Navarre recoiled before the enemy,

leaving thirty of their number dead or writhing on the ground, while the heavy dragoons of Brissac, led by Roger de St. Lacy, the gallant Duc de Bellegarde, advanced by double troops in dense order from a trot to full speed, and with the old *cri de guerre*—

‘Montjoie and St. Denis for France!’ as all their brandished sword-blades flashed against the morning sun.

A dreadful conflict took place, for Brissac’s dragoons were heavy men, accustomed to fight on foot or on horseback ; and in the mêlée we beheld with fierce impatience how helmets were cloven, buff coats pierced and shred, while heads and weapons, men, standards, and horses swayed or went down into that armed and living sea which struggled in the mountain gorge—went down to rise no more !

Bellegarde was wounded by a splendidly-accoutred young imperial colonel, who wore a coat of steel lined with scarlet velvet, with crimson hose, a black plume in his helmet, and the eagle on his breast ; and who, throughout this conflict, on which the morning sun shone with unclouded brilliance, was conspicuous alike by the glitter of his equipment and the rashness of his courage. Yells, shrieks, groans, the clashing of swords and the sharp ringing report of pistols echoed between the hills. Men were crawling out from the press covered with bruises, blood, and dust ; wounded horses were hopping about on three legs, and others, in the throes of death, rolled madly from side to side, kicking furiously all who came near them. This roused all our fire ; and, with something like a shout of fierce joy and anger mingled, we saw the dark dragoons of Marshal Brissac give way at last before the solid German ranks.

‘Now, gentlemen, *it is our turn!*’ exclaimed the handsome young Marquis—the heir of Huntly—as he brandished his sword, and his dark eyes flashed with the fire of his nature, while he spurred to the front with a glove in his helmet—the gift of Lady Anne Campbell, of Argyle, whom he afterwards

married. ‘ Montjoie and Saint Denis ! France—France and Scotland, for ever ! trot—gallop—comrades—les Gardes Ecossais, follow me—CHARGE !’

Every lip was set; every cheek was flushed; every eye was sparkling as I gazed along the ranks of the chosen hundred cuirassiers, when the voice of our leader and the shrill twang of the trumpet bade us move, and when the contagious ardour ran from man to man and heart to heart along that Scottish line—Scottish in name and blood, and heart and soul—second to none in pride of race and chivalry.

On, on we progressed from a trot to a gallop, and the ranks grew denser, holster to holster and boot to boot, as the horses closed upon each other; and like a stream of lightning, the hundred guardsmen poured forward in all their brilliant trappings, with uplifted swords and St. Andrew’s cross waving on the wind, as Sir Archibald Douglas, of Heriotmuir, held it aloft in his stirrup. On, on we went, and though they were eight to one, the dark ranks of the reitres and lancers quailed and wavered before us !

Headlong we rode at them, and plunged into the vapour made by the smoke of firearuns mingled with the morning mist. This murky cloud seemed full of helmeted heads, of gauntleted hands, the bright points of levelled pikes, of brandished swords, and waving standards; while the air was laden with cries, tumultuous sounds, and the heavy odour of gunpowder.

Now—now we are within arm’s length of them—

There was a mighty shock as rearing horses and shrieking men went down on all sides of us, but we burst right through the heart of the foe, breaking their close array of horses’ heads and cuirassed breasts; the dead and the dying marking our track as on right and left we hewed them down.

Raynold Cheyne, Scott of Tushielaw, Dundrennan, and the Chevalier, were all fighting like the peers of Charlemagne, and each performed many acts of heroism. The Master of

St. Monance, son of James Sandilands, Lord Abercrombie of Abercrombie, was struck on the breast by a shell, while riding next me. It was thrown from the citadel, and in exploding, blew his jaw off, but, singular to say, injured no one else. He gave a strange, half-smothered cry as his horse turned and fled; he was dragged by the stirrup down a steep ravine, and we never saw him more.

Dagobert bore me bravely; but, bewildered by the fury of our advance and the concussion of the encounter, I knew not for a moment where I was, whether on earth or in upper air, so great was the din around me, until a sharp ringing blow on my helmet recalled my energies with all the instinct of self-preservation, and I found myself thrust somewhat out of the press, and opposed hand to hand to the young colonel—he in steel and scarlet velvet—whose valour we had observed for some time, and in whom I now recognised my Parisian acquaintance of the Place de la Grève, of the Chateau d'Amboise, and latterly the abbé of the tavern at Sezanne—Monseigneur the Prince of Vaudemont—the son and heir of Lorraine!

For a moment my confusion nearly destroyed me.

‘Ha!’ he exclaimed, thrusting at me furiously; ‘welcome to this meeting, M. Blane. Mordieu! you have kept your appointment well; now I am no longer M. l’Abbé of the tavern, but a reitre who will skewer you on his sword like a pigeon on a spit.’

‘Your present guise becomes you better than the garb of a spy,’ said I, dealing him a blow which cleft a gilded pass-guard off his cuirass.

‘Tudieu, my fine fellow! I find that I must kill you, then—here is cold steel for a hot heart! Lorraine, Lorraine, and down with the Fleur-de-lis!’ he exclaimed, pressing fiercely on me; but the war-cry brought so many other horsemen and swords into the mêlée, that we almost immediately, and perhaps fortunately, separated.

Our veteran Marechal de Logis was fighting valiantly in the front rank to capture a standard, the bearer of which, a richly accoutred cavalier, struck the sword from his hand, and was about to slay the fine old man, when I drove up his blade, and dashed Dagobert almost on his hind legs between them. The Imperialist was a finished swordsman; but perceiving that he was weary, I resolved to force his guard. He could barely cover himself on the side opposed to me, so pressing forward I struck the fort of my sword furiously on his blade, and thus succeeded in giving him a cut on the right shoulder; and while taking care to receive his sword, as it came forward, on the cross-bar of my hilt, I ran him through the body, and wrenched away the standard. The blood poured over my glove and pommel as he fell from his saddle, and there was an end of my poor Lorrainer, for the time at least.

He was the Count de Bitche, colonel of petardiers under Duke Charles—the same infamous Count who had abducted and strangled the beautiful Countess of Lutzelstein, so I have no reason to deplore very much, that my lunge through his Lordship's ribs proved so successful.

The standard I had taken bore the three wings of Lorraine, and was borne by the Prince of Vaudemont's horse.

'Arthur Blane,' said the old Marechal de Logis, 'I thank you for that timely succour and good service. I am getting old now; a man, like a drum-head, cannot last for ever—both wear out in time; but I have seen a day when no man in Europe could have stricken a sword from Patrick Gordon's hand.'

The veteran had provided himself with another weapon, and was spurring on once more; but now, the rout of the enemy's cavalry was general, and they fled at full speed, goading and goring their horses' flanks, as they retired past Bitche, towards the stronger citadel of La Mothe, which lay some miles distant.

For two miles we—the cuirassiers of the Scottish Guard—

together with the Navarrese light horse, and the dragoons of Brissac, followed them, killing and capturing at every step of the way, though the valiant young Prince of Vaudemont made no less than nine attempts to rally them and to repulse us.

‘Well, my Lord Dundrennan,’ said the Marquis, as they galloped side by side; ‘how felt you in your first charge to-day?’

‘A glorious disregard alike of death and fear!’ was the proud reply; ‘and I am sure that such was the feeling of us all.’

The rout of so superior a body of horse was entirely attributed, by the Duc de Lavalette, to the skill and fury with which we advanced; for cavalry when charging, should always trot gently for about a hundred paces, and thereafter increase their speed until they attain a full and furious gallop, closing to the croup when within twenty paces of the enemy; but such was the celerity with which our hundred cuirassiers advanced, that we charged fully two thousand paces, boot to boot, without breaking; and it may fairly be admitted, that when horsemen have achieved this point of perfection they would ride through a stone rampart—they are fit for anything.

The field, or rather the roadway where this skirmish took place, was strewed with dead and wounded. After the former were stripped and the baggage plundered, one could get any article of attire for a twentieth part of its value.

A Parmese dagger, for a franc.

A velvet coat laced with gold, for five francs.

A sword, a hat and feathers, for a pot of stroh wine.

Our petardiers blew up the barrier gates of Bitche, which were feebly defended by the town guard and a few old soldiers armed with partizans. The castle was stormed by the light horse, who were dismounted for that service; and who, in their anxiety to wipe out the disgrace of their late repulse, acted with great cruelty, ‘sparing,’ as the Marquis

de Toneins told us, ‘none but the *ugly* and the *poor*.’ We blew up the magazines, spiked the guns, and set the town on fire; and as the old song says,

‘When churches and houses blazed all in a flame,
With *tan-ta-ra-ra*, away we all came! ’

CHAPTER XXII.

A DANGEROUS BOAST.

‘IN the poor Master of St. Monance we have lost a gallant comrade,’ said I, as we began our march the next morning.

‘He fell in battle, Blanerne,’ said the Marquis; ‘well—a Scottish gentleman—a cadet of the house of Calder—has nothing more to ask.’

After receiving the sacrament and twenty rounds of ball cartridge, we advanced towards La Mothe, the operations before which were full of chivalrous little episodes.

Like Bitche, La Mothe, in the bailiwick of Bassignie, had the reputation of being impregnable, as it crowned the crest of a mountain of hard rock, which overlooked all the neighbouring eminences. A tributary of the Maese flowed at its foot. The town had but one gate, which was strongly fortified and guarded by flankers, mounted with brass cannon. It was filled with troops, who, like the inhabitants, were faithful to the Duke of Lorraine; and his Bailiff of Bassignie, the Chevalier Raoul d’Ische, commanded them with vigour and resolution, in which he was ably seconded by the Prince of Vaudemont, who had now joined him with all his fugitive cavalry. Thus we anticipated great trouble in convincing these Lorrainers that their native country should become the property of king Louis.

That no time might be lost in reducing the place, as the army of Count Gallas was only one hundred and fifty miles

distant, Camp-Marechal Hepburn, to whom the siege was intrusted, enclosed the town and mountain on all sides. He formed seven batteries of thirty guns against it, and laid five mines under the walls; but our chief difficulty was a low bastion which lay before the entrance. It was mounted by twenty heavy guns, and swept the whole ascent for nearly a mile. This formidable barrier was named, after the Duke's daughter, the Bastion de Louise. It worked us infinite mischief, and though intrenched before it, with all the skill of the great trench-master the Chevalier Antoine de Ville, the Scottish infantry of Ramsay and Lesly suffered severely, losing in killed and wounded nearly fifty men daily.

The wetness of the season increased our discomfort in our tents, and the sharp cold midnight rain that poured and pattered on the canvas walls often penetrated them, while the vibration of the tent pole and straining of the cordage made one dream at times of being at sea, and often at night, when asleep and muffled in my cloak, I saw, in fancy, the black and rocky Rinnns of Galloway—my native coast—rise before me, with the wild waves of the western sea dashing on their flinty brows.

The operations before La Mothe were of a very harassing description. While the Cardinal de Lavalette continued his march towards the Rhine, Hepburn, with the Marquis, the Viscomtes of Turenne and Arpajou, the Colonels Lesly and Ramsay, pressed on the siege, which the indefatigable Chevalier d'Isch protracted for nearly five months, until besiegers and besieged were alike weary and exasperated. Vast numbers of our men were buried under earthen banks and parapets by the exploding mines, the bursting of bombs, and by the cannonading; while our trenches were nightly scoured by pike and arquebus, for the Chevalier and the Prince were reckless and courageous to a fault.

The Marquis de Toneins, a youth who had seen more battles and sieges than he could count years—the idol of

Anne of Austria's maids of honour—made our *sixth attempt* to storm the Bastion de Louise ; but was repulsed with unusual slaughter, and lost nearly all his men by their being hurled over the rocks into the river below. De Toneins was wounded by the Prince of Vaudemont, who had singled him out during the assault ; and when he was borne bleeding into my tent, the remarkable conversation I had overheard at Sezanne, concerning the divorced Duchess de Charost, recurred to me ; when de Toneins fell wounded, Raoul d'Ische tried hard to despatch him by a pike-thrust.

Turenne, the young Marquis's rival alike in love and war, next day made the seventh assault on the same bastion, with the same success, though ably seconded by the Chevalier Ramsay, Knight of St. Lazarus, with his company of the regiment of Hepburn.

During these disastrous attacks, we, with the other cavalry, were employed in scouring the whole province of Alsace, of which we had taken full possession in the name of Louis XIII., who required only La Mothe and one or two other places to complete his conquest. The firing was incessant. Cannon, mortars, and bombardes, muskets and arquebuses, environed the walls the livelong day with fire and smoke ; and our fellows returned the compliment with the same amiable inventions ; and in bulwark, trench, and battery, familiarity with danger soon bred contempt alike for shot and shell. But the fire maintained from the Bastion de Louise, from daybreak to sunset, was the most terrible and destructive that we had to encounter ; and the extinction of this battery, before we could reach the gate (our only avenue to the town) was imperative.

I conceived the idea of achieving this, by nailing up the cannon ; and having spoken of it, in the hearing of several officers, one night, as we sat under the shelter of a haystack, drinking stroh wine out of cups and jars, my observations reached the ears of Sir John Hepburn, who sent for me, and with one of his quiet smiles which rather piqued me, he said,

‘What is this I hear, Mr. Blane—you have conceived a project to silence that devil of a bastion which is so destructive to us?’

I bowed, and he continued with the same smile.

‘I am glad to hear of it, for, by Jove! if we stay here another month, our horses’ bones will stand through their skins, like the ribs of a gridiron; as we have foraged and eaten up the whole of Alsace! And now for the project?’

I reddened with vexation and confusion, for my words were heedlessly spoken, though seriously conveyed by some meddling gabbler; and as I stood before this well-tried soldier, who had fought in the Scoto-Bohemian bands at Fleurus, commanded an army on the Vistula, stormed Frankfort and Marienbourg, and who had led the final charge of the Scots brigades at Leipzig, I trembled to be deemed by *him* an empty boaster, and so replied—

‘It is true, Sir John, that some such idea has occurred to me.’

‘But this Chevalier d’Ische has boasted that never a Scot shall show his moustache within pistol-shot of him.’

‘I have been nearer to him twice than I am now to you, Sir John; and he has had good reason to remember my vicinity.’

‘Ah! And where were these meetings?’

‘First, in the Place de la Grève, where I passed my rapier fairly through him.’

‘And secondly?’

‘At Sezanne; but I am bound in honour not to say *how*.’

‘But your project?’ said Hepburn, stroking his moustache.

‘Since my name *has* been mentioned in connection with this affair,’ said I, with a bitterness which I had some trouble in concealing, ‘I will undertake to destroy yonder battery, or perish in the attempt.

‘You will!’ he exclaimed with joy.

‘To the brave all things are possible.’

‘Turenne, de Toneins, Arpajou, Ramsay, and I, all con-

sider ourselves pretty brave fellows ; yet you see, my boy, we have all failed in turn.'

' But your example has given me double courage.'

' I thank you, Blane. 'Tis spoken like your father's son ! But how many men do you require ?'

' None.'

' None !' he reiterated.

' I shall go alone on this hazardous enterprise.'

' And you dare hope to achieve this—to spike these obnoxious guns ?'

' Yes ; I hope to do anything I make up my mind to, from foraying a hen-roost to firing a city.'

' Bravo, my boy ! you should have been with me in Poland and Bavaria !'

With a heart full of hope, ardour, and anxiety, I left his presence to ponder over my undertaking, and on reflection, the desperation of it crushed and appalled me. It seemed as if I had suddenly made up my mind to perish—to sacrifice life and existence for a bubble, when even, with all the chances and mischances of war, I might have many years to live, and much to achieve—and though mentioned last, not thought of least, the restoration of my ruined house and humbled family to their ancient name and fame at home.

' Blane, when compared with this project of yours, the ideas of Don Quixote were superlative wisdom !' said the Marquis of Gordon gloomily, when I rejoined the Garde du Corps.

' But my honour is pledged.'

' True,' he replied ; ' and the honour of the Garde du Corps Ecossais too, my dear fellow, for the eyes of the whole army will be on you now. But, doubtless, you have some fair maid of Galloway at home, whose heart will leap when she hears of this ; or perhaps some pretty one in gay Paris, who, whether you fall or succeed, will read with joy the triumph of your bravery in the " Mercure Française."'

‘ Alas, no! Marquis—neither in France nor at home in the dear land I never more may see, have I one to weep for me.’

‘ Tudieu! that’s odd.

‘ None,’ I added sadly, ‘ except—’

‘ Ah! there is an exception!’

I sighed—but I thought only of the Countess for an instant—and then of the golden-haired Nicola.

‘ Strange?’ I muttered, ‘ that even in this hour of perplexity and anxiety that girl’s face comes before me!’

My resolutions were soon formed. At sunset I crept as close as I dared to the bastion, and with a telescope examined it from every point; but the bourgeoisie who manned it soon discovered me; a salute was fired in honour of my appearance; the bullets of their arquebuses fell thick around me in a shower as I crept back, and escaped to mature my plans and perhaps to—pray.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE BASTION DE LOUISI

DUNDRENNAN, Sir Quentin Home, the Chevalier Livingstone, and other gallant gentlemen of the troop were anxious to share with me the honour of this perilous enterprise; but, aware of the danger—the almost certain death—to be incurred, I peremptorily declined all assistance, and resolved to achieve the deed alone, or pay the penalty of my own folly.

The firing languished as usual after sunset, and before nightfall had completely ceased. I clasped on my cuirass and gorget, buttoning over them the doublet of a Lorrainer who had been killed last night in the trenches. It was of dark cloth, faced and trimmed with the colours of duke Charles. I put on a light helmet, stuck four pistols in my girdle, and leaving my sword, took only a dagger. I had a light ladder,

ten feet long ; a rope, a hammer, and a pocketful of spike nails ; and with this apparatus, when the miners were at work, and the out-guards or covering parties sleeping in their blankets, capôtes, or rocquelaures, I issued from the camp, and leaving all behind, advanced on my solitary and desperate enterprise towards the Bastion de Louise.

Frequently I paused to listen ; but no sound came from the town, the ramparts and church spire of which—for it had but one—towered above me in the dark and moonless sky, across which the clouds were hurrying in black and broken masses.

As I crept on my mission, strange thoughts of home and of other times *would* force themselves vividly upon me ; and I remembered the green breezy braes, and the grassy dells, where the mountain runnel brawled under the broad-leaved water docks or the purple heather, and bright yellow broom, where as a boy I had played among the lambs, and gathered the white daisy and the golden buttercup, or watched the white smoke curling from the huge hall chimney of my father's old grey tower. To-night I might be slain—slain far, far away ; and I thought of the quiet green grave where my father and mother slept so peacefully side to side in the old kirkyard at Glenkens, and a wild, deep wish rose from my heart to my lips that I was at rest beside them, and away from the selfish hurry of life and all the horror of war !

Anon came hope of success, and prouder thoughts arose within me, and grasping my dagger, I continued to creep stealthily forward.

Rearward, I heard the grating sound of the shovel and pickaxe in the trenches, as the sappers of the Chevalier de Vile replaced the gabions, or battened down the earthen banks, which the cannonade of the past day had disturbed. Perhaps a lantern might throw out a momentary gleam ; but even momentary was too much ; for then a lurid flash would break from the citadel, lighting all the sky with instantaneous redness, and a ball would whiz over my head towards the miners.

ramp ; or a shell would curve high in air, distinctly traceable, as it soared from the mouth of the mortar and sunk downward to its destination, by the fuse that flamed upward through its touch-hole , and now the terrible Bastion de Louise arose before me in massive strength, with its row of twenty brass guns frowning *en-barbette*, over the slope of the rampart.

Anxiety and shame filled my heart on finding that the bastion was full of men ; sentinels, too, were on the parapet, as their outline, with helmet and arquebuse, were distinctly visible. For me to proceed was impossible, as the least sound might draw a volley towards the spot where I was lurking ; but to return to the camp, merely to report that I had failed, and that my attempt, however rash and gallant, had proved a mere bravado, was more than I could think of, or endure with patience.

Creeping on, I came close to a stockade, which rose at the angle of forty-five degrees to the height of five feet in front of the ditch before the bastion , some shrubs and bushes grew at its base, and among these I lay close ; so close, indeed, that I heard the words of command given, as the Lorrainers marched into the town, and, to my inexpressible relief, left none in the bastion, save the four sentinels. Four men were more easily to be met than four hundred ; but even by this reckoning how was I to dispose of them ? To pistol them all in succession was next to an impossibility, situated as I was ; moreover, the discharge of a single shot would suffice to rouse the whole town, and man the walls from flank to flank in five minutes.

The darkness had increased, and fortunately for me the night bore every indication of becoming a stormy one. A high wind swept the side of the mountain ; the river hurried over its bed of rocks with a hoarse brawl towards the Maese ; and the gusty blasts, as they came in fierce and fitful squalls, piled the clouds in black and inky masses above La Mothe, the black outline of which—tower, spire, and rampart—stood forth black and sharply, at times as broad glares of sheet

lightning flashed across the sky, seeming to *whiten* the summits of the distant hills, and to tip with fire the dewy leaves of the shrubs that covered all the rocky ground ; and now, to my joy, came a broad, blinding, and united torrent of rain, falling slowly but surely, as if it would last for hours.

The frightful and oppressive stench of the partially-buried slain that lay before the stockade was not the least of my troubles ; for in some of the places I had crept over, the men of Ramsay and of Hepburn were interred only a foot deep ; and where the rain had washed away the soil, their toes and fingers, and more horrible still, their white skulls and ghastly teeth, were visible among the soft mould and sprouting grass !

I crept through a small aperture formed by some chance bullet in the stockade, and drawing my ladder after me reached the edge of the fosse that engirt the bastion ; and now I could perceive that the dark figures of the four sentinels had disappeared ; they had withdrawn to their stone turrets, one of which terminated each angle of the ravelin.

Still crawling serpentwise, I dropped my ladder into the fosse, (which on my side was only twelve feet deep,) and descending crossed it, over splinters of fallen masonry and exploded shells. Placing the ladder against the sloping face of the bastion, which was sixteen feet in height, I easily reached the stone cordon that girdled it, and from thence, all wet and slippery though it was, by the drenching rain, I swung myself up to the cope ; but not daring to cross it erect, I crept inwards, keeping close alongside the nearest cannon, and at length stood *within* the parapet of the dreaded Bastion de Louise !

My heart leaped within me !

The rain was still pouring downward or aslant as the gusts blew it ; not a sentinel was visible ; each was in his box, or stone turret, within a pistol shot of me, but the bellowing wind, and the rain that smoked along the parapet, and bubbled

in the gorged gutters, concealed every sound, and with my spike nails and hammer (the face of which I had carefully covered with thick leather to preclude the faintest sound of clinking) I proceeded at once to remove the leaden aprons from the touch-holes, and to complete my dangerous task, by crawling from gun to gun, and keeping my figure as much as possible below the upper line of the parapet—a precaution almost needless, as the darkness was so great.

I had spiked four culverins, when suddenly a light flashed along the wet and shining pavement, and two dark figures drew near me. My pulses stood still—but relinquishing my hammer for a pistol, with the resolution to sell my poor life dearly and desperately, I shrank close under a gun-carriage and lay *en perdu*, while two officers, cloaked and helmeted, evidently making a nightly round, passed within a yard of me, responding to the challenges of the various sentinels. One was undoubtedly the Prince of Vaudemont; and the other, who bore the lantern, I discovered in a moment to be my acquaintance the Chevalier d' Ische.

‘ So M. le Governeur, you will only let him have this place as a pile of ruins,’ said the Prince as they passed ; but I did not hear the reply.

‘ Good,’ said the Prince again, ‘ but the vivres—’

‘ O—the rats are good—the cats most excellent—we have no want of provision,’ responded the gay Chevalier, and as they turned the angle of the works and disappeared, despite the rain and discomfort of the night, I heard him singing his invariable song—

‘ O vive le fils d'Harlette !
Normands,
Vive le fils d'Harlette !’

I resumed my task, and in less than five minutes, by twenty blows of my heavy hammer, had driven twenty spike nails home to the head, firmly and securely in the vents of a

many pieces of cannon, unheard and unseen ; though I expected every instant to hear a shout, or receive a shot from the dark recesses of the angle-turrets. Had the night been fine or fair, this feat had never been accomplished ; but I should have perished in attempting it. I now descended the parapet, and from the projecting cordon reached my ladder, recrossed the fosse, and on ascending the opposite side, left my means of ascent, together with my hammer, as a legacy to the enemy. The stockade was easily surmounted from the inside, and half blinded by the pouring rain and by the excitement of my own feelings, I rushed over the half-buried dead, and back towards the trenches to report that the Bastion de Louise had been deprived of its teeth.

As the reward of my enterprise, I narrowly escaped being shot by my friends. On hurrying towards our lines, a voice crying *qui va là ?* from the angle of a trench, and the rattle of a musket made me pause ; but being breathless by my race down hill, I was unable to speak. I had stumbled upon a trench guard of the young Marquis de Tonein's regiment.

'Qui va là ?' shouted the sentinel again. 'Stand, monsieur, and deliver the parole.'

'*Saint Louis.*'

'Bon—good,' he replied, shouldering his musket.

'The countersign, if you please ?' said I.

'*Paris.*'

'Thank you, friend musketeer.'

'*Saint Louis et Paris.* Bon ! a thousand thanks, Monsieur Ecossais. A rash fellow would have fired at once on any man rushing thus from the enemy's lines. And now, brave comrade, what of the Bastion de Louise ?'

'It is fangless now.'

'Mordieu ! you have accomplished your task. O monsieur, that I were you ! we shall dance a cotillon there in the morning.'

All blackened, muddy, and drenched, I hurried to the

quarters of Sir John Hepburn, whom I found ensconced in the lower story of a ruined windmill, with the Viscounts Dundrennan, de Turenne, and Arpajou ; the Marquis de Tonains ; and Colonels Ramsay and Lesly, some sleeping, some smoking and drinking Rhenish and stroh wine by the light of a stable lantern ; and to them I reported my success. The tall and stately Hepburn embraced me, all soiled as I was. He made me drain his cup filled with wine, and taking from his own breast the cross of St. Lazare, said—

‘ Wear this for me ; and be assured, Arthur Blane, that on my recommendation king Louis will more than confirm the gift. I here proclaim you the premier cuirassier of the Scottish guard !’

The first man who invented the plan of nailing up cannon, by driving an iron spike into the touch-hole, was Gaspar Vimercalus, a soldier of Bremen, who thus destroyed the artillery of Sigismund Malatesta. There have been many contrivances suggested to force out nails that were thus inserted, but none have been found of general use.

CHAPTER XXIV

MONTJOIE ST. DENIS !

NEXT morning, before daybreak, preparations were made to capture the disarmed bastion, and to effect a lodgment under the walls and town gates.

The rain and wind had passed away, and the keen, bright stars were looking out of the blue sky ; but there was no moon, and half-an-hour before dawn, three hundred chosen men of the Scottish regiments of Hepburn, Ramsay, and Lesly—one hundred from each—mustered in front of their wet tents, to storm the Bastion de Louise. They were all volunteers, lightly accoutred, and supplied each with the

chardon de fer, or crampiron, which was strapped over the shoe by means of a buckle. Previous to this invention, stormers used to take one shoe off, to prevent them from slipping on a rampart.

The Vicomtes de Turenne and Arpajou, neither of whom had completed his twenty-third year, and Sir John Hepburn, led the assault. With them were twenty dismounted cuirassiers of the Scottish guard, of whom I was one, armed with partizans, and carrying daggers and pistols in our girdles.

'Forward, gentlemen, quickly and in silence,' said Sir John, as we marched to the front, and began the ascent of the mountain; 'to-night we shall sup in La Mothe, and drink to the fair maids of old Scotland in the best Burgundy of Duke Charles.'

Followed by a strong covering column, under Colonel Ramsay, we left the trenches in our rear, and almost without a sound advanced over the wet and slippery ground I had so lately traversed twice, until we were within musket-shot of the walls, when the unfortunate explosion of an arquebuse, as a soldier stumbled and fell, gave an alarm, and in a moment after, we heard the drums beating in La Mothe; curving and sparkling, the rockets hissed aloft in fiery circles as the walls were manned and the Lorrainers stood by their guns in the Bastion de Louise, and opened, at random, a fire of small arms upon us.

A brilliant flash, with a deep, hoarse, booming sound, from the town barrier, made me stoop instinctively, as a cannon shot passed over my head, and tore to pieces a poor pikeman in my rear. It struck him right in the breast; a portion of his body hit Lord Dundrennan with such force that he could scarcely breathe for some minutes after; but on we hurried with all speed, anxious to come to blows at a shorter distance.

The coolness of the brilliant Marquis de Gordon, as we advanced, was somewhat amusing. Drawing off his gauntlet, he said to a captain of Ramsay's corps—

‘**Forbes, I’ll trouble you for a pinch of snuff.’**

The captain was about to comply, when a second flash broke from the town rampart, and a ball cut him in two.

‘**Zounds!**’ said the Marquis, ‘**M. le Vicomte Arpajou, I shall trouble you, for poor friend and his box have gone together. Comrade,**’ he added, to a man who fell with a shriek, as his left leg was shattered by a musket-shot, ‘**why are you making such an outcry? it will not cure you; but here is my silk scarf, ’tis at your service as a bandage.**’

‘**Bravo, comrades and gentlemen!**’ exclaimed Sir John Hepburn, brandishing his sword; ‘**here we are at the foot of the glacis!**’

Over it, the arquebuses à croc were pouring death and havock among us; but the destruction of their cannon had evidently dismayed the Lorrainers, and deprived them of all confidence. Still their fire was so steady and severe, directed as it was by the dawn which was breaking behind us, and clearly defined our figures, that we wavered now at the edge of the fosse, after surmounting and destroying the stockade by axes, hammers, and crowbars, and there was an unmistakeable reluctance to advance, while the stormers fell fast on every hand, and we heard the tumultuous cheers of Ramsay’s covering column, which was pressing on our rear.

Hepburn held aloft his purse.

‘**Forward, comrades!**’ he cried; ‘**a thousand francs to the first with me in the bastion.**’

Not a man among us stirred; he grew deathly pale, but still continued to brandish his sword, while the bullets sawed all the turf about him.

‘**Come on, sirs—my old Scots musketeers and gentlemen of the guard—Dundrennan, Douglas, Blane, and Bruce, follow me!**’

‘**Hepburn, you have insulted us all by this offer of money,**’ said the Marquis of Gordon.

‘**My cross of Mont Carmel, in the King’s name then.**’

he replied, with a flushing cheek, as he tore it from his breast and flung it into the fosse.*

' Hurrah !' burst from every tongue.

' Montjoie St. Denis !' cried Turenne.

' France — France and Scotland for ever !' added the Vicomte Arpajou.

And with wild shouts that rent the air of the calm morning sky, we rushed into the fosse, and planting our échelles against the bastion, ascended, fighting hand-to-hand, and firing our pistols into the faces of the foe, as we grappled for life and death on the summit, and forced a passage in, with the loss of eighty brave Scottish soldiers.

Sir John was the first man on the rampart ; the second, and consequently the winner of the cross of Mont Carmel, was one of his own private musketeers, a poor gentleman from the braes of Angus, who rose to be count and general of cavalry in the French army.

The Lorrainers were driven furiously back ; but a savage conflict ensued with them between the bastion and the town-gate ; and there, in the cold gray light of the morning, were Scottish musketeers and German pikemen, chevaliers in brilliant plate-armour, gentlemen of our Garde du Corps, and those of Lorraine, with the lean and famished bourgeoisie of the town, in their black and battered harness, all mingled in one wild mêlée of whirling swords and clubbed muskets, as they closed up round the tall figure of Hepburn on one side, and the fierce and energetic Raoul d'Ische on the other.

Side by side two of our cuirassiers had almost hewed a passage to the shattered barrier, the archway of which was encumbered by paths of dead and dying, and behind these the musketeers and pistoleers were nestling, and plying fast their shot.

These two were young Sir Robert Bruce of Blairhall, and

* An incident almost similar occurred with the Irish Brigade at Havannah.

old Sir Archibald Douglas of Heriotmuir, who had lost his helmet, and whose silver tresses were glittering in the dewy air.

‘ You have the precedence here by age,’ said Blairhall, saluting him with his bloody rapier; ‘ my brave friend, lead on !’

‘ Nay,’ said Sir Archibald, lowering also his blade, ‘ do thou advance, my brave boy ; where a Bruce leads, a Douglas may be proud to follow !’

Fatal courtesy ! It was scarcely exchanged, ere the first was run through by a pike, and a gigantic bourgeois brained the latter by the ampoulette of his clubbed musket. The poor old baronet’s brains flew over me, but I pistolled his destroyer, who fell prone into that gory puddle where the two bravest gentlemen of the Garde du Corps Ecossais were lying side by side.

In a moment afterwards I found myself opposed to the Chevalier d’Ische, hand-to-hand, and so closely, that our weapons were engaged up to the very hilt, and being encumbered by a wounded man, who grasped my right leg in his death agony, I received a severe cut on the right cheek.

‘ Ah, thou diabolical Scot ! at last I have thee !’ said the Chevalier, grinding his teeth.

‘ Beware, Chevalier, beware !’ said I, infuriated by the sight of my own blood ; ‘ I have sworn to write my name on your skin with a good Scottish dagger !’

‘ And yet, dog, ’tis to my worthless sister you owe your frippery !—yea, life itself !’ he added, with a terrible glance.

‘ True, true ; let us pass—let us part !’ said I, feeling sudden compunction, and standing only on my defence.

‘ In a moment I shall kill you—adieu ! do you call *that* fencing ? no lover could be a greater fool than you !—Ah, queen of heaven !—I am gone !’ he exclaimed, and tossed his sword into the air. As he threw up his hands, the blood gushed from his mouth, and he fell on his face. A ball, fired by Lord Dundrennan at another person, had pierced his chest, and slain him !

On his fall all resistance ceased ; and thus, after considerable loss, at seven o'clock on the morning of the 25th **July**, 1635, the Scottish general of Louis XIII. hoisted the **French** standard on the ramparts of La Mothe.

CHAPTER XXV.

LETTERS FOR PARIS.

SIR Robert Bruce of Blairhall, and Sir Archibald Douglas of Heriotmuir, with other gallant gentlemen, French and Scottish, who were slain in this assault, we buried with all honour and solemnity in the church of La Mothe. I found the body of the silver-haired Sir Archibald lying close to the barrier gate, surrounded by piles of dead men. Near his hand lay a broadsword he would never grasp again. It was an old family weapon, and on its blade was engraved, ‘*Att Floddenfield and Pinkycleuch.*’ I also found the Chevalier d’Ische. As he lay dead within the Bastion de Louise, how difficult of recognition through that hideous mask of powder, blood, and dust, were the handsome features of the young and reckless Bailiff of Bassignie ! I thought of the gay and beautiful Clara—she whose miniature by Poussin I still wore at my neck—and my soul grew sad, as the pikemen of Arpajou bore him away to his hastily-made grave.

Our trumpets sounded *à cheval*, ‘to horse ;’ for all the cavalry were now to advance in pursuit of the Prince of Vaudemont, who had effected his escape towards the Maese ; and loud and shrill they rang between the mountain peaks, where so many lay that never more would rise until the trumpet of the archangel wakes that wooded valley with its final blast.

I had my foot in the stirrup of Dagobert, and was in the act of mounting to advance with the cuirassiers, when the

Laird of Tushielaw summoned me to the presence of the Camp-Marechal Hepburn, whom I found at the house of the defunct Governor of La Mothe, and seated in a splendid apartment, the tapestry of which represented the victories of Charles VII. over the English.

The Marquis of Gordon, Vicomtes Turenne and Arpajou, with other glittering nobles and chevaliers, were lounging about, speaking of the recent assault, drinking the Burgundy of poor Raoul d'Ische, and making considerable noise and merriment.

'This capture is quite equal to a victory in the field,' said Turenne.

'All Paris will speak of it for three days at least,' added Arpajou.

'Three days,' said Hepburn, folding a letter which he had just concluded; 'only three days you think, M. le Vicomte?'

'Peste! that is a long time for Parisians to talk of one thing, believe me, Camp-Marechal,' said our captain the Marquis; 'but here is my friend Mr. Blane.'

'I know of none so worthy to carry my despatch to Paris as you Mr. Blane,' said Sir John; 'and you will convey it to the feet of king Louis, with the standard which you captured so valiantly at Bitche. Be prepared to leave this in an hour!'

'Paris—ah! Mon Dieu, how I envy you!' said de Toneins and several others.

I bowed, and retired to make my brief preparations for a journey that was not without great danger, as the way for miles to our rear, through Alsace and Lorraine, lay through the country of the enemy.

The moment it became known in Hepburn's camp that I was to ride for Paris, letters for all the fair dames of that intriguing capital were poured upon me, until I flatly refused to take more. Dundrennan, the Chevalier Livingstone, and I know not how many others, gave me billets for Mad-

moiselle Ninon de l'Enclos. The Marquis of Gordon gave me one for Clara d'Amboise; Arpajou gave me one for Madame de Bouillon; Turenne gave me another for the lovely Mademoiselle de Chevreuse; and, among many others, the young Marquis de Toneins, though wounded, and in love with the divorced Duchess of Charost, gave me a little pink-scented billet, which I was to deliver personally to Mademoiselle de l'Orme. In short, there was a perplexing obliquity of morality, and oblivion of all marriage and family ties in this precious post-bag of mine, that was quite Parisian, and suited to the French taste of the age; for every one seemed to be in love with his friend's wife; and thus laden, with Hepburn's despatch concealed in the lining of my cuirass, I bade adieu to my gallant comrades, who resumed their march towards the Rhine, while I turned the head of Dagobert regretfully towards Paris the beautiful—Paris, the city of perdition.

'Take care of Mademoiselle de l'Orme,' was the parting advice of the Marquis of Gordon; 'lest she wile you to love her.'

'And what then, Marquis?' said I, gaily.

'She will break your heart, and fling it to the devil, as she has broken and flung those of others.'

'Farewell—I shall be wary, believe me.'

'Adieu'—and I galloped off.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE CASTLE OF VERSAILLES.

I TRAVERSED all the land of Lorraine, and never drew bridle save when I could not, without destroying my fine Spanish barb, press him further, or faster.

On passing the borders of Champagne, I proceeded more at my leisure, and after a pleasant journey of about thirty miles

per day, found myself one evening, in the beginning of August, trotting down the Rue de l'Arbre Sec, towards the old familiar masses of the magnificent Louvre, with all the buzz, bustle, chatter, gaiety, dust, and sunshine of Paris around me; and once more I saw its spires glooming in the twilight of azure and gold.

His Majesty was hunting at his country castle of Versailles (it was only a castle then), and would not return for a week; thus, after halting for refreshment and repose at my old hotel, the *Golden Fleur-de-lis*, in the Rue d'Ecosse, where Maître Pierre Omelette was still extant in all his glory and amplitude of night-cap and white apron, I flung all the frivolous billets with which I was intrusted into the box of the Hotel des Postes—all save those for Mademoiselle de l'Orme, whom I was anxious to see, and hiring a fresh horse, departed next day for the royal hunting-seat, without making any détour towards the château d'Amboise, though I looked wistfully at its shining vanes, and steep slated turrets as they rose above the coppice with a cloud of pigeons wheeling round them; but I rode rapidly on, feeling piqued, because the handsome and gay Marquis of Gordon had written to Clara, and had given *me* the letter to carry. Moreover I dreaded to meet her natural grief for her brother's death, and resolved seriously to consider the expedience of my visit, *after* the delivery of my despatch.

At this time, when the imperial general had nearly made himself master of all the bailiwick of Vaudevrange, and encamped his army between the Save and the Wilde, that he might more effectually succour the Duke of Lorraine; and when France and her allies were most unsuccessful in Italy, where the Duke of Parma was stripped of his territories by the encroaching Spaniards, notwithstanding all the valiant efforts of the French troops under the Marechal Duc de Crecqui, couriers or officers bearing despatches were ever anxiously waited for at the Louvre and Versailles, and by no

one more than Richelieu, who had precipitated France into this war with the German empire.

In a short time I approached Versailles, a small village on a rising ground, about twelve miles westward from Paris, and entered the avenue which led to the country palace or hunting castle built by Louis XIII. It is an edifice entirely of brick, coped with stone, crowned by balustrades and sculptured trophies, busts, and vases. All the statues, eighty in number, are antiques of white marble, and stand on carved corbeilles between the windows. In the centre is a balcony supported by eight Doric columns of richly-veined marble. Under this balcony stood a gentleman of the Scottish Guard, one of the twenty-four archers, on duty with his arquebuse, talking to some young nobles and Gray Mousquetaires, who were lounging about the grand entrance, and making it seem quite gay, with their slashed pourpoints and plumed hats.

Little hills that teem with game surround this quaint old hunting castle, on which, since those days, Louis XIV has engrafted one of the most magnificent palaces in the world.

Just as I dismounted, and gave the reins of my horse to a groom in the royal livery, a vehement blowing of horns, accompanied by the yelling and barking of dogs, the tramp of horses, and cracking of whips, approached, and I beheld the King ride up, surrounded by a gay and joyous but travel-stained band of hunters—the four dukes, who were gentlemen of his chamber, the grand huntsman, the grand fauconnier, a pack of hounds, and a host of grooms and keepers. They all came up by that stately path of ancient elms, the rows of which are twenty fathoms wide, and which lead from the old brick castle towards Paris.

I begged M. de Brissac, a gentleman of the Duc de Bouillon, and formerly a captain in St. Lacy's dragoons, who was riding beside the King, to mention that a courier had arrived from the army; and my request—or the words of it—spread like wildfire.

‘A courier from the army?’ said one.

‘Which army—we have five in the field?’ asked a second.

‘The army of the Rhine,’ replied a third.

‘From Italy, I believe,’ said M. de Brissac.

‘Ah!’ exclaimed the Duc de St. Simon; ‘from the Marechal Duc de Crecqui?’

‘Has he taken Parma from the Spaniards?’

‘Yes—of course. Parbleu! ’tis glorious.’

‘Parma is taken. Vive le Marechal Duc de Crecqui!’

Thus, amid confused shouts and blowing of horns, I found myself standing uncovered beside the stirrup of the timid and querulous king, who was in the act of opening a long despatch, which had just been handed to him by *another* officer, who, as De Brissac told me, had just arrived from the Duc de Rohan; and in this officer, who had preceded me by three minutes, I recognized my countryman the young Earl of Irvine, a colonel of foot. He looked pale, thin, and emaciated, for his right hand had been shot off.

‘My brave M. Irvine,’ said the King, ‘what reward must yours be?’

‘Permission to serve your Majesty with my left hand, since the right is lying at the foot of the Alps.’

‘Thou art a valiant Scot!’ exclaimed the King, opening the despatch.

But his countenance grew dark as he read on, for the letter detailed, in the gentlest manner, an undeniable defeat; and every lip was hushed and every eye bent on him while he made himself master of its contents.

‘Mordieu!’ he exclaimed in an altered tone: ‘so—so my lord, you were defeated at a place which M. de Rohan calls Bormio?’

‘Pardon me, sire,’ replied the politic Earl, with a profound bow; ‘we were not defeated—your Majesty’s troops never are. We simply retired, and left some of our soldiers in possession of the field.’

‘Ah! the killed and wounded, I suppose,’ said the King with a sardonic grin.

‘Alas! sire,’ resumed the young Earl, ‘I have still worse tidings to give, for it was rumoured in our army that your Majesty’s most faithful and valiant ally, Monseigneur the Duke of Saxe-Weimar, is dying.’

‘Dying!’ reiterated the petulant king; ‘what business has he to think of dying just now, after luring us into this German war; and just at the time when we need his assistance most? But good, my lord, go—and let us see you no more at Versailles until you have other tidings to give than those of the defeat of our armies and death of our allies.’

As the Earl turned haughtily away, I heard him mutter,

‘There never was a Scottish king dared speak to a Scottish earl, as this pampered Bourbon has this day spoken to me!’

And without according the least salute to Louis, he strode away, and next day left his service.

I now approached.

‘Another courier—Oho! ’tis a cuirassier of our valiant Scottish Guard; a good omen by St. Louis! Your despatch;—thanks, monsieur.

He tore it open, and there was again profound stillness as the king scanned it. He made himself master of its contents at a glance, and then read it aloud that all might hear, while I remained on one knee at his side, with the standard of Lorraine in my hands.

‘Pardieu! this is good—this is brave! Well done, my valiant Hepburn—thou shalt be a Marechal of France!’ exclaimed the King, as his eyes flashed with sudden energy and pride. ‘Alsace is ours!’

‘Vive le Camp-Marechal Hepburn—Alsace is ours!’ repeated the courtiers, and there was a vehement clapping of hands.

‘The Prince of Vaudemont routed before Bitche, and his standard taken by M. Blane, of our Garde du Corps Ecossais;

a thousand troop-horses captured, and fifty of the enemy slain in the valley of Ingweiler by this same M. Blane ; La Mothe stormed, the bailiff of Bassignie killed, and the troops of Hepburn pushing onward to the German frontier—to the Rhine which shall be ours ! Let the bells be rung and the cannon fired ! But who are *you*, monsieur ? asked Louis, turning to me.

‘ Arthur Blane, of the Scottish Guard, sir.’

‘ Good, my friend, kings have bad memories ; but you will soon find that mine is an exception,’

My heart danced with joy as he gave me his hand to kiss, and held up the standard in view of his attendants, whose applause again burst forth with a rapture truly French.

‘ Tonnerre de Ciel !’ said Louis, glancing again at the despatch ; ‘ our loss in men is considerable.’

‘ Heed it not, sire,’ replied the gay Duke de Bouillon ; ‘ the boys born this week in our good and virtuous city of Paris will replace the loss in battle.’

‘ And so M. le Chevalier Hepburn is in full march to attack Count Gallas ?’

‘ Yes, sire.’

‘ Mohammed condescended to go to the mountain ; so, as M. le Comte will not come to meet the troops of France, we must march them to fight M. le Comte. Bon !’ exclaimed Louis, rubbing his hands.

He was about to address me again, as I stood the cynosure of a thousand eyes, when suddenly a carriage, escorted by twelve mounted musketeers, wheeled up the ancient avenue of elms ; and Louis muttered, while nervously folding the despatch.—

‘ Here comes our devil of a Cardinal ! Ah—your Eminence is welcome—we have just got despatches——’

‘ From the Duke de Rohan and the Chevalier Hepburn, replied the Cardinal, coldly.

‘ How know you that ?’ asked the King, with astonishment.

‘ I know every man who approaches your Majesty,’ replied

the Cardinal, with a cold smile: ‘*you bore letters from our army of the Rhine?*’ he added, turning abruptly to me.

I bowed.

Furtively and swiftly, he gave me a fierce and hawk-like glance of hostility, and followed the King into the castle of Versailles. The attendants flocked after them, and I was left standing almost alone in the Cour de Marble.

The strange glance of this terrible man startled me. I knew not how to account for its expression; but I feared him, and felt assured that I had incurred his displeasure—that he hated me! While standing irresolute whether or not to retire, M. de Brissac, the kinsman of the Duke de Bouillon, approached, with an intimation that a collation awaited me, after which I was to return to the Louvre, and there, after reporting myself to the officer commanding the archers of the Garde du Corps Ecossais, to await despatches, which I was to convey to the army.

CHAPTER XXVII.

CLARA'S MINIATURE, AND HOW IT PROVED A TALISMAN.

AT luncheon M. de Brissac and I were joined by the Earl of Irvine and several young sparks of the French Guards, glittering with jewels, velvets, and cloth of gold. We were attended by servants in the royal livery of France. The collation was luxurious; the wines rare beyond price, and served up in a lofty apartment, the walls of which were painted azure, powdered with silver lilies, and the ceiling was decorated by an allegorical subject, representing France as a beautiful woman, in whose half nude and wholly voluptuous figure, I recognized Clara d'Amboise, seated in a car drawn by white swans, and attended by Ceres, Flora, Pomona, and other goddesses, whose faces were those of Chevreuse, de Guerchi, and

other court beauties, who were conducting her to the temple of *Virtue*.

The war, duels, and girls were the usual topics of conversation. I detailed all the particulars of our brilliant charge at Bitche; on which Lord Irvine said, with an air of pique,

‘So it was only an affair of horse—a little charivari—nothing more.’

‘Rather more successful than your marshal’s at Bormio, however!’

‘Oh, do not speak of Bormio; we had there a more dreadful day than I shall ever see until the day of doom! There, gentlemen, the best blood in France was battenning in the sun upon the Alps, and dying the waters of the Fredolfo purple. My dearest friend was there mortally wounded by my side in dragging me wounded, as you see, from the press, and expired that night placing his wife in my arms as a sacred trust.’

‘A pleasant little arrangement,’ said De Brissac gaily; ‘I hope the lady was handsome.’

‘I do not understand you, monsieur,’ replied the young Earl, gravely; ‘my faith is for my friend—my sword is at the service of the King.’

‘So is mine, my Lord,’ said the gay Brissac; ‘and moreover my hand and moustache are at the service of all fair ladies of his court. Morbleu! don’t let us quarrel over this excellen wine; but tell us, M. Blane, got you much plunder in Alsace?’

‘A younger son’s share only; but whose stately château is that, on the other side of the water?’ I asked, pointing to a large edifice which was visible between the elms.

‘That is Trianon, a retreat of the King’s. He comes to Versailles when tired of Paris; and goes to Trianon when tired of Versailles.’

‘Of which he will soon tire now,’ said a chevalier of the French guards, with a wicked wink.

‘You smile, monsieur?’ said I.

‘Of course.’

‘ Why?’

‘ Madame d’Amboise is there just now.’

‘ At Trianon?’

‘ Yes.’

‘ And Anne of Austria—’

‘ Is no doubt busy with M. le Cardinal, adjusting the boundaries of France at the Rhine.’

There was such a loud explosion of laughter at this remark, that I am sure ‘ M. le Cardinal’ would have knit his brows had he heard it.

Trianon was in the form of an oval; in the centre was a large iron gate, having two sentinels of the French line, pacing before it. It had numerous pavilions crowned by glittering vanes; and its cornice was surmounted by an elaborate balustrade, and row of porcelain vases. It was gaily beautiful, for everywhere flowers bloomed, fountains played, and golden fish swam in the ponds around it.

Again my old emotions of pique at the Countess returned, and I resolved to depart at once to Paris, after thanking M. de Brissac for his courtesy, and drinking a farewell bumper to the Earl of Irvine.

This young peer was a son of Archibald seventh Earl of Argyle. He had served long against the Spaniards, and obtained a Scottish earldom from Charles I.; but died without heirs-male, and his title became extinct. He was brave, handsome, and a mirror of military honour.

I did not leave immediately for Paris, but wandered irresolutely about Versailles. The afternoon proved hot and sultry. There was not a breath of wind to stir a leaf of the three avenues of giant elms that diverge from the castle. The air and the canals between the latter and Trianon were alike still and motionless. The sun played with a golden gleam between the glittering fountains, on the yellow fruit of the orangery, and cast long flakes of hazy light athwart the deep shady vistas of the greater avenue; and now since the

hunting-train had dispersed, all seemed lifeless and calm about this beautiful summer residence of Louis XIII.

While gazing at Trianon, across the verdant lawns, (then studded with the little daisy called in France "la belle Marguerite," from the Virgin of Cortona,) and pondering which apartment of that long façade, that is sixty-four fathoms broad, was occupied by the Countess, I seated myself upon a rustic sofa under a broad umbrageous elm, and drawing her miniature from my breast, unclasped and looked upon it, remembering her remarkable advice to wear it constantly for her sake, as it might 'prove a *talisman*, should I ever get into trouble.'

Something of the old and dangerous tenderness this fascinating woman had excited in my young breast rose again within me, as I gazed upon her beautiful face and winning smile ; but while these thoughts coursed through my heart and head, the hot champagne seemed bubbling to my brain ; the avenue, the palace and its fountains swam around me, and overcome by the languor of the day, the toil of my late journey, and the potent wine of the most Christian king, I fell into a sound sleep, with the miniature open in my hand—the miniature of the King's mistress, whose face was as well known to the court as the great clock of Notre Dame de Paris ; and this was within a pistol-shot of the gate of Versailles !

How long I slept I know not, but I awoke chilled and stiff.

The lengthened shadows of the elm-trees, and the deepening gloom that fell across the courts of Versailles, warned me that the day was past, and I started up.

'The miniature !' thought I.

Anxious and bewildered I searched for it on every side, but searched in vain. It had been stolen from me while I slept ; and not daring to make any inquiry after it, I was glad to mount and ride back at a furious pace to Paris, with a vague hope of leaving danger behind me.

I had soon reason to repent the loss of my *talisman*.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

MARION DE L'ORME.

AFTER putting my costume in proper order, I placed a new plume in my hat, pointed up my moustache, perfumed my hair like a court gallant, and sent little Poquelin about dusk for a fiacre, in which I was driven to the house of Marion de l'Orme, for whom I had no less than six billets, one of which was from my friend the Marquis de Toneins, son of the Marechal Duke de la Force.

I felt confused and anxious while I was driven through the streets; and amid the clatter of wooden shoes and the cries of dealers in nicotina, perfumed wash-balls, walking canes, and bonbons, I thought only of the loss of the miniature, and its probable results if it fell into evil hands. Mademoiselle de l'Orme's residence was in the Rue St. Jacques, and adjoined an old house which was one of the sights of Paris, for therein Alexander II. of Scotland, when on a visit to Queen Blanche, the mother of Louis IX., visited St. Dominique, the confessor, in 1219, so it was old enough, you may be assured.

As I rang the bell at the gate of the Hôtel de l'Orme—for so was her handsome mansion styled—and gazed upward at its row of illuminated windows, I felt a glow of interest at the anticipation of being tête-à-tête with this remarkable woman, who had become so celebrated throughout all France for her gallantries, the number of her lovers, the lustre of her beauty, and the reckless manner in which she broke through and trampled under her pretty foot all the rules by which the women of the Christian world have hitherto been guided.

I gave my name to a porter in the court; he, in turn, gave it to a valet in the vestibule, who repeated to a third on the staircase, and in due time I was ushered into a magnificent saloon, where waxlights, perfume, persons in glittering dresses,

gorgeous furniture, and rich hangings appeared on all sides, like a brilliant scene at the Opera Française, and forming a strange contrast to those which I had seen for some time past—the trenches of La Mothe and the tents of Hepburn's army.

On three sides of this saloon, the tapestry of silk represented an allegory of Fame proclaiming by trumpet-sound the happiness of France; while Justice, sword in hand, drove away whole legions of Sedition, Discord, and Envy. The fourth side portrayed the proudest scene in the military history of 'Scotland's ancient enemies'—the brave Black Prince waiting at supper upon the King of France, on the same day he had conquered and taken him prisoner. The furniture was all of walnut (each piece a miracle of carving), or of buhl, and beautifully inlaid with shell and mother-of-pearl. Statues, bronzes, pictures, and countless objects of virtù and bijouterie were strewed around the tables of this long saloon, the carpets of which were of the softest Persian manufacture. As I perceived all these details at a glance, a gentleman, clad almost entirely in blue velvet and cloth of silver, started forward from amid the splendid group that were lounging around the low fauteuil, on which Marion de l'Orme was seated like a princess. He was my new acquaintance, M. de Brissac, then her most favoured lover; and, taking me by the hand, he at once presented me as 'a gentleman of the Guard, just arrived from the camp of the Chevalier Hepburn.' She received me with the most enchanting grace; and, giving me her perfumed hand to kiss, placed the six billets in a casket, to be read or burned when she was more at leisure.

She made me sit beside her on the fauteuil, for she had a hundred questions to ask—about the charge at Bitche; the storming of La Mothe; who were killed, who were wounded, and who had escaped; and whether I thought the ladies of Lorraine as charming as those of Paris. Then, in her inquiries, she strung together the names of counts, marquises,

and chevaliers, captains, lieutenants, and musketeers, without giving me time to reply ; and among the names of her friends she enumerated nearly all the cuirassiers of the Garde du Corps Ecossais. The brilliance of her manner, her wit and vivacity, dazzled and charmed, while it silenced and at times almost stunned me.

Her face was perfect in feature and regal in contour ; her eyes were dark, but full of light, and a hundred varying expressions passed through them ; her teeth and lips were as those of a child ; her jet-black hair was gathered in braids and folds, which displayed to perfection the form and pure whiteness of her temples, her slender neck, and little ears, from each of which hung a diamond pendant worth six thousand francs, the gift, as I was afterwards informed, of the young marquis, our captain. She was attired in rose-coloured satin, trimmed with four flounces of black lace ; her long peaked stomacher was golden cloth ; her necklace, bracelets, rings, and the jewels among her hair, were sparkling with diamonds, which enhanced the splendour and the delicacy of her beauty.

The passionate light that filled the eyes of this dangerous woman made my heart flutter when she smiled on me, and caused me to dream of the joy of being loved by her as she twice gave me her hand to kiss—the loveliest hand in Paris.

Marion de l'Orme was then in her twenty-fourth year, having been born at Chalons sur Marne, in Champagne. Her father was a gentleman of property, who could have given her about sixty thousand francs as a marriage portion ; but she preferred a life of gallantry and freedom, such as the reigns of Henry IV and his successors had made fashionable, and thus she wickedly despised a reputable settlement.

Lovers taught her soon—too soon—that she was beautiful, that she was witty, and that there was a divine grace in all she did. She sang well, excelled in the guitar, and was wont to admit that she had loved passionately—at least whilst the

love lasted--eight or nine consecutive lovers. The first was Des Barreaux, the next was Rouville, of whom she soon wearied, as he was not handsome enough ; but the poor fellow fought a duel about her with his successor, La Ferte Senecterre, and left this valley of tears with three feet of a rapier in his body. Then came Miossens, to whom she took a fancy as he caracoled his horse along the Boulevardes, and to whom she bluntly sent a little pink note, inviting him to come and sup with her. Then followed Arnauld, the unfortunate Cinq Mars, who was beheaded by Richelieu ; M. de Chatillon ; the Marquis de Gordon, who was forgotten as soon as our drums died away on the road to Lorraine ; and lastly, my new friend, M. de Brissac, whom I should have found little difficulty in supplanting had I been so disposed. Cardinal Richelieu himself was among her lovers. He gave her a cane worth six hundred francs, and she used to visit his Eminence dressed as a page ; for her whims were ever rash, fantastic, and unaccountable.

Love excepted, Marion had no frailty, and she had many virtues. She chatted away of her past amours with a coolness which surprised me. Perceiving that M. de Brissac was admiring Cupid and Psyche, a beautiful group in bronze—

‘ Ah !’ said she, ‘ that was a gift from poor Senecterre ; and the buhl pedestal on which it stands, was given to me by that wretch Miossens, whose moustache had always such a horrid odour of nicotina.’

‘ And this beautiful casket,’ said I, ‘ excels that of the Duchess d’Ancre.’

‘ Scarcely, in size at least,’ said Marion ; ‘ for the Duchess, in her famous casket, carried all her jewels, together with her best locks and bosom. The buhl table that it stands on was a present from dear Cinq Mars, who thought himself so handsome. There was a time when I thought him so too, but then he was such a self-willed toad that he bored me.

And see, M. Blane, my gay friend, the little Marquis de Toneins was actually wounded at your terrible La Mothe?

‘Yes, mademoiselle, in ascending the breach.’

‘Ah! he sought the bubble reputation even at the cannon’s mouth, but in lieu of the bubble got the ball, which M. Shakespeare forgot to consider. I doubt not, my dear M. Blane, your despatches will cause many a tear to be shed in France.’

‘True, mademoiselle,’ said De Brissac, with a sentimental air; ‘many an eye, lovely as your own, that God made only for smiling, now is compelled to weep.’

‘But their tears will only render brighter the laurels which bedeck the brows of the survivors. The number who have fallen saddens, doubtless, our glory and triumph, but,’ she added, with her fine eyes flashing, ‘they fell for France, bequeathing victory to her and to their comrades. Is it not so, my dear M. Blane?’

A burst of applause from her admirers prevented me from replying; and then she asked, in a low voice—

‘Is the wound of De Toneins severe?’

‘Rather, mademoiselle; yet I know of a pain greater than even a musket-shot can inflict.’

‘Indeed; what is it pray?’

‘To feign indifference where we feel but—love,’ said I, with an air so gallant and tender that it won me an approving smile from Marion and a frown from M. de Brissac, of which mark of displeasure I was resolved to be quite oblivious; for what the deuce was M. de Brissac to me?

‘And you feel this often, M. Blane?’ she asked, with an inexplicable glance, in which drollery predominated.

‘Nay, mademoiselle, I never felt it until *now*,’ I replied, sinking my voice, as an irresistible spirit of gallantry urged me on; ‘I am unused to the society of one so beautiful; so pray, mademoiselle, excuse my diffidence.’

‘Gentlemen are ever telling me that I am beautiful,’ said Marion, pettishly; ‘I would rather be beloved.’

Fortunately—for there was a malevolent gleam in the eyes of De Brissac—the servants appeared with a cold collation, served up in silver and Bohemian crystal of crimson flowered with gold. We had wines of the most expensive description to overflowing, and a hundred gay anecdotes and witty remarks were given on all sides; for the boudoir of Marion de l'Orme was not a place to repress the liveliest sallies of the wits and sparks who hovered about her, and who courted her smiles. I remember that De Brissac made us all laugh by the pointed and satirical manner in which he related a droll story of the Bishop of Auvergne, who was sorely tried and tempted by the devil, who met him in his cathedral church at night in the form of a handsome woman with very scanty garments. Then Marion assumed her guitar, and sang to us first an old ballad of the Palatines of Champagne; and then a Spanish romance, in which a lover declared that once when thinking of his mistress he fell into a pond, where *the heat of his passion* had such an effect on the water, that it bubbled up and boiled all the fish—the trout, perch, and carp—so that his friends who came to hook him out, forgot all about him in the delicious repast afforded them by the ready-cooked spoil of the waters.

These songs, stories, and the generous wine put us all in excellent humour.

'Everything here is princely,' said I to a grave-looking cavalier, who wore the Grand Cross of Malta.

'Yes,' he replied with a sardonic grin; 'for the love of Mademoiselle is a commodity that rises in value according to the season in Paris, and the rank of her adorers.'

This was evidently a disappointed man; but Marion gave more to the poor than any ten Priors of his order.

'Fill your glasses, gentlemen,' exclaimed De Brissac, standing on one of the rich tapestry chairs; 'fill them to the brim. I mean to parody old Martial for the occasion, thus:—

'Let six full cups to Nævia's health go round,
And fair de l'Orme's with seven full cups be crowned.'

‘ Vivat, messieurs ! off with them !’ and the mad cavaliers drained seven in succession ; but after this it pleased M. de Brissac to become very cross, jealous, and suspicious ; and, assuming his plumed hat and long sword, he proposed to leave.

‘ Well, if you are determined to be unpleasant, as shall not detain you,’ said Marion, with a tone of pique ; ‘ but,’ she added in a kinder whisper, ‘ when am I to have that diamond necklace from the queen’s jeweller ?’

‘ I know not,’ he answered, gloomily ; ‘ and I care not.’

‘ Indeed ?’

‘ Yes,’ he replied, twisting his right moustache.

‘ It is only six hundred paltry crowns.’

‘ Crowns of the sun—mordieu ! my wife’s cost but two hundred.’

‘ What is Madame to me ?’

‘ More than I am, apparently,’ retorted de Brissac, as he thrust his broad beaver on his head, and retired in a gust of wine and passion ; but not without levelling a dark glance at me.

In an hour after, I tired of this witty and brilliant but loose company, and bade Marion adieu. As I kissed her hand, she gave me a glance so bright and tender, that I would not have given a brass bodle for the chances of M. de Brissac, had I deemed it worth my while to attempt supplanting him in her favour ; for the silver saltire of the Scottish Guard bore all before it in Paris ; but, save once in her coach on the Boulevards, I never saw Marion again.

This wild and remarkable girl, whose beauty turned the heads of all the gallants in Paris, died at the early age of thirty-nine, after four days’ illness, when she was still lovely as ever. Of the cause of her death, I dare not trust myself to write ; and but for the reckless life she led, she might have reserved her wondrous beauty longer. She had divine hands, and never wore a pair of gloves for more than three hours.

She left sixty thousand francs' worth of dresses and ornaments. She never accepted a denier from a lover; but yet had presents of dresses, jewellery, plate, and furniture sufficient to stock the Louvre.

During her last illness, which made a great sensation in Paris and in the French camp, she confessed ten times to a priest, having always something new, some little forgotten sin to communicate. The gallants of Paris, and all her former admirers, laid her body in state for twenty-four hours, with a maiden crown on her head; but the austere curé of St. Gervais very properly denounced this proceeding as a ridiculous scandal, and tore it from the corpse; yet Marion looked so beautiful in her pure white shroud, that the '*Gazette Historique de Loret*,' of the 30th June, 1650, has the following epigram upon her:—

‘Le pauvre Marion de l’Orme,
De si rare et plaisante forme;
A saissi ravis au tombeau,
Son corps si charmant et si beau! ’

Marion had three sisters, all very attractive girls. The eldest, Madame de la Montague, a beautiful blonde, was wont somewhat rashly to boast—‘we have no riches, but we have honour;’ yet my friend Viscount Dundrennan, like M. de Moret, nearly broke his neck when descending one night from her chamber window.

The youngest and least artful was married to M. Maugiron, Treasurer of the Artillery du Roi, who served with me in the campaign of Alsace. As they lived in the arsenal, old Marechal de la Meilleraye, though he had not a tooth in his head, fell in love with her; but finding that she was carrying on an intrigue with the Cardinal de Retz, he revengefully deprived her poor husband of his commission; and this is all that I know of the family of the gayest woman that ever influenced the scandalous, joyous, and immoral city of Paris.

CHAPTER XXIX.

ARRESTED.

To resume my own narrative: I had proceeded from the Rue St. Jacques, after a somewhat devious course, along the Rue Betizi and the Fosses St. Germain l'Auxerrois, when at the place where the latter is intersected by the Rue de l'Arbre Sec, a dark and ancient street that leads from the Rue St. Honoré to the Seine, I found all the oil-lamps extinguished, and a fiacre, surrounded by twelve foot musketeers of the Comte de Treville's company, standing fairly in the centre of the way. At that moment the clock of St. Germain tolled two; but daybreak seemed far distant, as the shadows lay deep and black in the quaint and overhanging streets of Paris.

'Halt, monsieur, and give up your sword,' said a muffled man, whose voice was familiar to me.

'Not to a mere mousquetaire,' said I, unsheathing it, and standing on my guard; 'and least of all to one of your rank, my ex-captain of horse; for now I recognise you, worthy Monsieur de Brissac.'

'Bah! did not Francis I. of France give up his to the son of a butcher?'

'True, when only three of the Scottish Guard remained on their feet beside him, and a mountain of slain lay round them. By St. Andrew—'

'Hark!' said a musketeer; 'a Huguenot swears by St. Andrew.'

'Surrender your sword, Monsieur Arthur Blane, I command you!' reiterated Brissac.

'You have a warrant, I presume?'

'Peste! you are particular!—'

'Most people usually are, under these circumstances.'

'My word and sword should be warrant enough; but

here is the document,' said he, holding a paper close to one of the lamps of the fiacre. '*Louis, par la Grace de Dieu, Roi de France et de Navarre*,' &c. &c., 'signed at our castle of Versailles,' and so forth, all in due form. 'What the devil would you have more? I have arrested a Bishop and a Maréchal of France—ay, Monseigneur de Montmorency himself—with infinitely less ceremony.'

Inflamed with anger and alarm, and irresolute whether to fight, fly, or yield, I still kept my point towards him.

'Mere musketeers have not status sufficient to arrest a gentleman of the Scottish Guard;—we rank with field-officers of the French line,' said I.

'M. Blane forgets that I am noble.'

'By marriage with a lady descended from Joan of Arc's family; but you forget, my dear M. Brissac, that by the edict of Louis XIII., (whose agreeable warrant you bear,) passed in 1614, "females descended from *La Pucelle*, shall no longer ennable their husbands," so that heraldic force is at an end.'

'Pardieu! beat him down, messieurs, with the butts of you muskets, for I am weary of this!' exclaimed de Brissac, with sudden passion; and finding, on reflection, the danger and futility of further resistance, I surrendered my weapon, saying with a lightness, I was far from feeling,

'Here is my spit—but pray be careful of it, for a dainty demoiselle's pink glove, is, or should be at the shell of it.'

'Little Babette's of the Fleur-de-lis, in the Rue d'Ecosse, I presume,' said he, scornfully; but as Marion de l'Orme usually wore pink gloves, he shook with rage, as he thrust me into the carriage and took his place beside me. The fiacre was put in motion; the musketeers ran at a double quick march on each side of it, which dispelled my first idea that they meant to assassinate me; and as we drove on, I taxed my memory in vain for any offence or crime I might have committed.

‘ Oh—you are angry at finding me at little De l’Orme’s perhaps?’ said I.

‘ What care I for Mademoiselle de l’Orme?’ said he; ‘ who is her lover now?’

‘ Rumour says a certain M. de Brissac—but I know ’tis the young Marquis de Toneins.’

‘ Bah—her affections are of the most rapid nature !

‘ Well, my dear M. de Brissac,’ said I, in that sneering fashion which the Parisians were fast teaching me; ‘ if you are not jealous of me, you will perhaps have the kindness to acquaint me with my crime.’

‘ You have been in love with the King’s mistress.’

My heart trembled at these words ; but I resolved to put a bold face on the affair.

‘ Nay, nay, M. Brissac ! she is in love with me.’

‘ Oh, fie, M. Blane ! But no matter ; I have known a man branded with the fleur-de-lis, or sent in chains to the galleys at Toulon for less.’

‘ Pleasant reminiscences !’

‘ Very ; suggestive, too : I hope you like them.’

‘ This arrest is an infamous violation of the privileges of the Scottish Guard,’ said I, losing all temper ; ‘ these privileges were given us by the predecessors of Louis XIII.—by kings better and braver than he—privileges won in battle, and which he cannot, dare not revoke !’

‘ Dare not ?

‘ No !’

‘ Peste ! do they include the right of intromitting with the King’s mistress ?’

‘ King Louis will hear more of this ; if he wishes, a town taken in Lorraine, or a castle stormed on the Rhine.’

‘ Your Scottish government may, if they choose, place a French gentleman in the castle of Edinburgh, by way of reprisal,’ sneered De Brissac.

‘ That will comfort me mightily ’

‘I presume there is no lack of French fiddlers and dancing masters in Scotland?’

‘There are twenty thousand Scots now under Hepburn and La Force; I would they were all to-night in Paris.’

‘The Marechal de la Force is a brave fellow.’

‘Ay, none is braver. He will face the devil or a cannon-ball—’

‘But he cannot face his angry wife.’

‘In all things he excels M. de Brissac.’

‘Thank you; but for the place to which we are going, I would ask you to alight and measure swords with me.’

‘Now that you speak of it, where are we going?’

‘Cannot you guess?’

‘No; but your musketeers must be well nigh out of breath by this time.’

‘We are *en route* to the Bastille.’

‘The Bastille!’ I exclaimed, while my blood ran cold.

‘Yes; ‘tis occasionally fashionable to visit it at the French court.’

‘I would prefer any other prison—’

‘The Château d’Amboise, perhaps; but we cannot always choose our own quarters, M. Blane,’ said De Brissac, as the fiacre, to the great relief of messieurs the twelve breathless musketeers, halted close by the Porte St. Antoine; and vainly I recalled the warning of the Marquis de Gordon, when first I met him at Clara’s—

‘*Be wary, for her chamber has occasionally led to the Bastille, or to the more dreadful oubliettes of the Louvre!*’

CHAPTER XXX.

THE BASTILLE.

WHEN I alighted, the musketeers closed round me. We were under the shadow of an immense dark building, the massive outline of which was broken at intervals by eight round towers. A jagged gateway frowned above the carriage; there was a clanking of iron bars; a horrible jarring of bolts upon the pavement as an iron gate was opened and shut; a swinging of chains and exchange of papers as De Brissac gave my sword to the governor with a malicious and undisguised smile of triumph; and then I found myself in the custody of the Bastille—fairly enclosed within its walls.

The Bastille!

How much of terror had not that name conjured up within me; and now visions of dungeons and of sufferings inconceivable came vaguely before me, as I was requested, with cold politeness, to ‘step *this way*,’ and mechanically I followed, my heart sinking lower at every step, along passages, vaulted, dark, and strong, on the slimy or cold and whitewashed walls of which the torches of the gaolors flared and gleamed; and a horror came over me, that if I did not reach a pestilential vault at the end of these devious corridors, some secret plank or paving-stone might suddenly sink beneath my feet, and precipitate me, crushed and mangled, into some hideous oubliette or subterranean tributary of the Seine, where, among the festering bones of former victims, mine would rot, unburied and forgotten. I had often heard of such things; and was there aught too horrible to be associated with that edifice?

Bastille meant simply an ancient castle; but that of Paris alone retained the name; though we in some manner adopted

it in Scotland by designating our fortified mansions *Bastel-houses*.

The terrible Bastille of Paris, begun by order of Charles V in 1383 for the defence of the city, was completed by his successor, Charles the Well-beloved ; and since then it had been the infernal abode of misery and of tears, dedicated solely to the secret purposes of despotism and tyranny.

As we advanced into the interior of its vast and gloomy keep, I was deeply impressed by the number and complication of low-browed doorways, steep staircases, and narrow corridors by which its enormous walls were perforated ; and by the number of huge iron locks, bolts, bars, and chains by which all the entrances were secured. At last we crossed a high and spacious hall, having a roof and floor of stone. In the centre stood a square mass of stone-work, having one little orifice or window, but all cramped and bound together by bars of iron run into the stone with lead. It was one of those terrible cages made by the decrepit tyrant, Louis XI., for the confinement of great state-prisoners—a notable invention of the Cardinal de Baluc, who was the first to experience the comforts of them. The Most Christian King was charmed by the invention, however, and had several made ; thus they were styled by the lively French, ‘the King’s little daughters.’ Each had a door of stone—a slab like the lid of a coffin ; and none on whom that dreadful door was closed ever came out again—alive, at least. In this vast sepulchral-looking hall the torches flared and gleamed with a red and smoking light.

Rage and hatred began to mingle with my alarm as we passed from thence along a corridor beyond the hall, and I was ushered through a Gothic doorway into an apartment. Then the Captain of the Bastille turned to me, and said—

‘M. Blane, this is your chamber and sleeping-place.’

I glanced round me. The room was circular, as it was in one of the towers attached to the keep. Its walls were covered by pale leather stamped over with gilded flowers. It

had one long and narrow window, having a pointed arch, well barred without and glazed with stained glass charged with the arms of France, and latticed with brass wire within. The furniture was very plain, but a comfortable fire of wood was blazing on the stone hearth.

‘ Monsieur’s apartment is quite historical,’ said the Captain of the Bastille, with a well-bred smile, which to me seemed then a hideous leer; ‘ it was in this place that the Scottish archer, a Huguenot who was accused of a design to fire the city of Paris, was tortured to death; and here the Comte d’Auvergne, son of Charles IX., was confined until 1616.’

‘ Confined—how long?’

‘ About fifty years, I think, monsieur.’

I made no reply, for my tongue seemed cleaving unto the roof of my parched mouth. He bowed and left me; and the clatter of bolts and locks as the door was secured, together with the sound of retiring footsteps, as the Captain and his people withdrew, sank like iron into my soul.

My bed, which was destitute of curtains, stood close by me, and I flung myself upon it, exclaiming with bitterness—

‘ And *this* is the reward of my service to a faithless King! Send a fool to France and he will still be a fool—’tis our old Scottish proverb, and truly it applies to me.’

It seemed almost incredible that the events of the last hour, or of the past day, were reality; that within so short a period, I had been graciously received by the King at Versailles, and had delivered those triumphant despatches which filled all Paris with joy; that within an hour, I had been in the gay and brilliant salon of the beautiful Marion de l’Orme, surrounded by the chief wits of Paris; and now, that I was a lonely state prisoner, without an accuser and without a crime; a prisoner, perhaps to remain so in secret during the caprice of the King; to be handed over, as others have been, from gaoler to gaoler, from chatelain to chatelain; for my name a number substituted, until my hair became white, and even my

oldest friends had forgotten that I had *once* lived and mysteriously disappeared from among them !

These thoughts were bitter agony !

I thought of the Countess d'Amboise, and the Marquis de Gordon ; but I had no means of communicating with either of them, and thus they would remain probably in ignorance of my situation. Who was my enemy—who were my accusers ? I started up and traversed my room to and fro, with impatient strides, until I grew weary, and again seated myself on the bed to watch the embers on the hearth as they flickered, reddened, and died in the uncertain currents of air that came down the huge chimney, the aperture of which was secured by an iron grating ; and so the long, long night wore away and the lingering dawn began to brighten over sleeping Paris and the distant country.

I opened the stained-glass casement and looked out. Far down below, beyond the outer rampart of the Bastille, I saw all the chimneys of Paris vomiting smoke ; the arsenal of Henry IV., a spacious pile, having three great courts and a portal, the pillars of which were cannon set on end. Beyond lay the Seine and the Isles of St. Louis and the Cité—the Paris of the kings of the first race and of Philip Augustus—rising like a mass of rugged castles, moated round by the river, which was bridged across by the quaint piles of the Pont de Notre Dame and the Pont de la Cité. Nearer still, waved the green trees which covered all the Isle Louviers. A yellow flush spread across the eastern quarter of the sky ; above it rolled clouds of murky amber, rendered darker by the morning smoke ; and as the sun ascended behind the horizontal stripes of cloud, which his rays turned to bars of seeming gold and fire, he tipped with a rosy gleam the countless quaint façades and features of the city, which spread around me, with all its churches, spires, and glittering vanes ; and chief of all, the huge dark double towers of Notre Dame, whose foundations were laid by Charles the Great. The queen of

French cathedrals, she rose from a sea of ancient roofs, steep, sharp, and conical ; and there, too, yawned the Parvis, a handsome old square, overhung by quaint houses, full of bustling shops, hurrying passengers, and a hundred varying noises. Then, as morning advanced, I heard the bells ringing in all the convents, monasteries, and steeples—St. Landry, St. Pierre aux Bœuf, St. Denis du Pas, St. Germain l'Auxerrois, and all the old churches of Paris as the city awoke, and roused itself to life and business, prayer and sin.

The live-long day, from my lofty perch, I watched far down below the sights and sounds of Paris passing and buzzing round me, until the rattle of fiacres and the clatter of hoofs died away, and the arteries of life that intersected the town became dark and still as night drew on again, and, with a sigh of weariness, I threw myself on my bed, to sigh and pray, and to utter futile imprecations and maledictions on the hour I came to France. My gaoler was a kind but taciturn fellow. He had served a long apprenticeship to chains and groans, and to sighs of unavailing anguish ; thus he seldom spoke ; yet, when he did, it was only to drop casual hints of the horrors by which I was surrounded, but quite in a common-place way, for the man had scarcely an idea of anything beyond the precincts of the Bastille ; and from him I learned that in this living tomb were state prisoners who had been committed to it on no better warrant than a *lettre-de-cachet*, of which letters any French noble might get a dozen from the premier any forenoon ; prisoners who had not seen the blessed light of day for more than forty years ; poor creatures whose crimes, if any, had long since been forgotten, even as their names were forgotten by their keepers, and as their existence was forgotten by the world ; like the dead of forty years ago ; and the whole record of whose mysterious disappearance from life and upper air, if record of it existed at all, might be found in some mouldy portfolio of Richelieu or his predecessors.

Such were the inmates of the Bastille!

One day I beheld a long train of personages on foot pass through the gate of St. Antoine. There were gentlemen guards, grooms, pages, and lacqueys. Six of the former bore a blue-silk canopy over the head of a tall and stately lady, who was also on foot, and carried in her right hand a lighted taper. As she passed along, cries of ‘Vive la Reine’ reached me.

‘What is all this?’ I inquired of my keeper, who chanced to be in my apartment.

‘It is her Majesty, Madame Anne of Austria, proceeding on a pilgrimage to the shrine of St. Fiacre, to pray for the health of the King, who is ill, and to return thanks for her own cure.’

‘Cure from what?’

‘A dangerous issue of blood, which M. Richelieu affirmed to be the malice of sorcerers, and which had baffled her physicians with all their skill.’

‘You believe in all this?’

‘Parbleu, yes! If M. Seguier, Bishop of Meaux in 1649, and Jean, Comte de Blois, bore testimony to the wonderful cures wrought upon them by praying to St. Fiacre, why should not a poor unlettered fellow such as I?’

‘True; this is unanswerable.’

‘And we all know, monsieur, that M. Bossuet, Bishop of Meaux, began a *novena* of prayers to implore the divine intercession for the Queen, who was thereafter safely delivered of a boy, who may be Louis XIV if he lives, yet is as unlike his father as I am.’

‘Perhaps you resemble the Cardinal,’ said I.

‘If court scandal is dangerous in the open air, monsieur, it is much more dangerous in the Bastille,’ replied the man, with a hasty glance around him, as he withdrew.

‘It is strange,’ said I to him on the sixth or seventh day of my captivity, ‘that your face seems familiar to me.’

‘Perhaps, monsieur,’ said he, smiling, ‘those who see our faces here, remember them for ever.’

‘What is your name?’ I asked.

‘Martin Omelette.’

‘How? any relation to my maître d’hôtel, Pierre Omelette?’

‘Who keeps the Fleur-de-lis, in the Rue d’Ecosse?’

‘Yes.’

‘I am his brother, M. Blane, and have had the pleasure of seeing you, and M. le Vicomte Dundrennan, and other gentlemen of the Garde du Corps Ecossais, there often.’

‘Alas! times are changed with me now, my friend Martin; I am alike poor and unfortunate.’

‘Take courage, monsieur; you have been here only seven days.’

‘D——n, only seven!’

‘We have had prisoners here for seven-and-forty, and yet they have been released at last—released when their minds had sunk to such apathy, however, that they would as readily have remained.’

‘Martin, you torture me!’

‘We had one for forty-six years in this very room; see, he has scribbled the walls all over with invocations of St. Fiacre, his patron, and the dates will show you an ordinary lifetime spent within this little place.’

‘Martin,’ said I, in a voice like a sob, ‘I should die of this place in one month.’

‘So at first they all say who come here; yet they get used to it—even those who are *secret* prisoners, and who, without *date* or *name*, are handed over per list from chatelain to chatelain. Ma foi! we have one in the lowest vaults who is so old that he has worn out a set of fetters, and is supposed to have been put in when M. de Salvaison was captain of the Bastille.’

‘In what time did this worthy flourish?’

‘In the days of Henry II.—about 1560.’

‘Impossible!’

‘ Seventy-five years ago, monsieur.’

‘ It is alike horrible and incredible !’

Martin smiled faintly, and whispered,—

‘ He is supposed to be a kinsman of Anne du Bourg, whom the Cardinal de Lorraine, a fierce and passionate man, hanged and burned in the Place de la Grève; but only *supposed*, monsieur, since he never speaks now, and we know not his name.’

As if he had said too much, Martin Omelette hastily withdrew, leaving me to torture myself with dark anticipations of the future, and to spell over the prayers with which my hapless predecessor had supplicated the intercession of St. Fiacre. But my mind *would* recur again and again with stinging poignancy to my present predicament. I thought now of all my futile aspirations after fame; of all I had done at Bitche, at Ingweiler, and La Mothe, in the service of this ungrateful Louis of France, whose wanton war against Duke Charles of Lorraine I saw in all its wickedness. Then I thought of my distant home and the scenes I never more might see; of the green pastoral hills and the woods of Blanerne, that cast their shadows on the Dee, whose waters rush to meet the Solway; of the birchen glen, on the brow of which the towers of old Tungland Abbey raised their gray-worn pinnacles above the waving coppice; of the breezy upland slopes, where the yellow corn ripened on the long golden rigs, where the bonneted ploughboy whistled, nor dreamed there was such a thing as tyranny in the world; where the black crow and the eagle that had their eyry in St Mary’s lovely isle were wheeling aloft, and I panted for freedom and for *home*!

Home! Alas! I had more friends in the grave than in the world; yet their graves were in Scottish earth, and that was all the world to me.

I thought of my unavenged quarrel with the house of Nithsdale; of my slaughtered father, as he lay all ‘boltered

in his blood by Lochar Moss; of our ravaged lands and ruined homes, all sunk in smoke and flame, as I had last seen the tower of Blanerne when I, a fugitive, looked back from the green hills of Galloway, and saw the weapons of the Maxwell troopers glitter on my track, as I forded the foaming waters of Urr. Then I thought of the horrors of the Bastille, and dashed my head upon my bed, as I longed—madly longed for liberty !

Louis XIII. I abhorred, but could not petition either him or the Countess d'Amboise, for paper and ink were denied me. How had our petty intrigue—if intrigue it could be called—been discovered ?

I remembered the loss of the miniature at Versailles, and the malevolent smile of the jealous De Brissac, and planned a hundred impossible schemes of escape and revenge; and so, amid all these bitter, burning, and impatient thoughts, the second weary week of my captivity wore slowly and monotonously away.

CHAPTER XXXI.

‘ NUMBER 32.’

PERCEIVING that I was becoming very dull and miserable, Martin Omelette brought me an old book, which he said had been left by my predecessor. It was a manuscript, and was entitled *La Vie de Monseigneur St. Fiacre*.

‘ St. Fiacre again !’ said I.

‘ Yes, monsieur,’ said he, ‘ and I hope it may serve to amuse you as much as it amused and consoled the poor chevalier, who for six-and-forty years——’

‘ Leave me, in the devil’s name !’ I groaned.

‘ Yes, monsieur,’ said Martin, bowing, for he never forgot his politeness, and withdrew.

Mechanically I turned over the leaves and read. The first line interested me, and I read on. It was the quaint monkish story of an ancient saint, and as this exalted personage, whose name is now ‘familiar as a household word’ to the Parisians, was a countryman of my own, I found some amusement, if I did not discover consolation, in the volume with which honest Martin had favoured me. The history was copiously interspersed by prayers, pious invocations, and occasional bursts of wild enthusiasm, for the admiration of the writer—an old canon of Notre Dame—were at times uncontrollable when writing of the ‘*Glorieux ami de Dieu, Monseigneur St. Fiacre.*’

‘The 30th of August is the anniversary of St. Fiacre,’ began the volume, ‘son of Ewen IV., king of Scotland, who began his reign in the year of our Redemption 605—a king who was educated, as the Black Book of Paisley saith, piously and carefully, under St. Culme, the abbot of Iona, by whom he was reared in all manner of human learning, and in the love of God in works of piety; yet he swerved from the precepts of his peaceful master, by being grievously addicted to war, as the king of Strathclyde and the half-savage Saxons then inhabiting the land now called England found to their cost, in many a battle fought and lost between the Tyne and Humber.’

Then the old legendary proceeded to tell us how Fiacre, the son of Ewen and his queen Frivola of Ross, was born in Dunstaffnage, and educated by Conan, Bishop of the Western Isles; and how he proved a brave, valiant, and virtuous prince: till once, when hunting on the wild shores of the Bay of Nigg, a strange adventure befel him.

Near a fountain, at which his horse was drinking, he saw a maiden of more than mortal beauty, with snow-white skin and golden hair—the spirit of the water. This was on the 30th of August, the festival of St. Rose of Lima. Of this spirit-woman he became deeply enamoured, and was wont to meet her again and again in the mirk hour, between midnight and morning, until he who sought to give her a human soul was

in danger of losing his own, for the spirit was a fiend, who sought the youth's destruction ; but Saint Fergus, the Bishop and Confessor, whose cell was hewn in the old craig of Inverugie, and whose right arm is now preserved in the cathedral of Aberdeen, besought the Prince to abandon the fountain, which he blessed and purified, by saying a solemn mass on the spot, after which the spirit appeared no more ; but that fountain is still named St. Fiacre's Well, and is famous among the northern peasantry for the miraculous cures accomplished by its waters.

After this, full of gratitude to Heaven for his narrow escape from perdition, Fiacre became a preacher, and renouncing his sword and buckle, his high estate and place, he quitted secretly, in the night, his royal home, among the dark mountains of Lorn, and became a teacher and preacher of the gospels. Visiting France when Clotaire II., son of the infamous and lewd queen Bredegonda, was king, he proceeded throughout all the land, leading the wild Franks to God, and working marvellous miracles by the way. At Toppaia, in Florence, he delivered a certain rich man of a devil which possessed him, but which immediately possessed his wife, who thereupon became frantic, and hanged herself upon an orange-tree. In memory of this riddance — whether of the wife, or the devil, or both, the chronicler d^oth not say — the rich man founded a chapel in honour of St. Fiacre, and the Dukes of Florence have since endowed and adorned it nobly.

The legendary then proceeded to state how St. Fiacre was assailed from time to time by the beautiful spirit of the fountain, which appeared to him, ever and anon, from the waters and wayside wells near which he passed, for he lived in forests and lonely places, subsisting on roots and herbs ; and thus he resisted more temptations than ever did honest St. Anthony of old : and now, when his father, king Ewen, died in Lorn, in 622, as Camerarius and Bishop Leslie tell us, St. Fiacre was

visited by a train of chiefs and priests from Scotland, summoning him to the throne; but he answered, that ‘for the inheritance of an eternal crown, he had renounced all earthly claims,’ and, turning away, continued the task at which they found him—covering the roof of his hut with turf. So his brother Ferquhard was chosen, in his place, King of Scotland, a prince who fell into the Pelagian heresy, and fought with his nobles, who threw him into a prison, where he perished miserably by casting himself upon his own sword.

Meanwhile, St. Fiacre lived in peace at his solitary cell, in a deep forest at Brieul, in Brie, where a place had been assigned him by St. Fars, Bishop of Meaux. There, with his own hands, the pious prince cleared the ground of its old primeval oaks and sharp briars, and there he built a chapel to the Virgin, where he gave to prayer the hours that were not spent in the cultivation of his little garden, the proceeds of which he gave to the poor. There he died on the 30th of August, the feast of St. Rose, in the year 670, and there he was buried.

Thereafter, for ages, his shrine was visited by crowds of pilgrims from all parts of France; till the 30th of August, eight centuries after, when a spring of pure water suddenly burst up from the chapel floor, and the monks of Meaux, recalling the legend of the spirit of the fountain which had tormented the saint of old, translated his relics to their cathedral in 1562; and the name of *Fiacre* was first given to hackney-coaches in Paris, because these vehicles were greatly used by sick and infirm pilgrims who visited the shrine of the Scottish saint, for which they usually set out from the hôtel of Maitre Nicholas Sauvage, which bore the sign of St. Fiacre, and stood in the Rue St. Martin, opposite to the Rue de Montmorenci, where it swung in the wind until 1645.

My hapless predecessor had probably, nay I have no doubt must have been one of those who adhered to the ancient faith, otherwise he could not have drawn much comfort from this

old monkish story. I yawned over it wearily, and in all the prayers to, and pious invocations of, St. Fiacre, trusted less than to the virtues of a rope ladder, a sharp dagger, and a brace of loaded pistols.

An occasional leaf of the *Mercure Française*, which I received wrapped round bread, butter, or fruit, acquainted me with the progress of events in the great world without, and thus I learned that war was still waged against Charles IV of Lorraine, that his daughter Marie Louise was still lurking undiscovered in Paris, in spite of rewards offered for her capture; and I learned, too, that my noble comrades of the Guard—how I longed to be with them!—were still under Hepburn, who, on the 19th of December, with a train of cannon, and six regiments of infantry, three of which were Scots—viz., his own, Ramsay’s, and Lesly’s—and with seven squadrons of horse, had boldly crossed the Rhine, repulsed the Imperialists, and captured Mannheim, thus securing the passage of the whole French army, under the Duke de la Force; that after this he had relieved the Swedish garrison in Heidelberg, and again destroyed the proud Imperialists before that magnificent electoral fortress. Then from another stray leaf I learned how, by one brilliant charge, the cuirassiers of the Garde du Corps Ecossais, led by the Marquis de Gordon and Sir John Hepburn, had completely swept the Germans from the valley of the Neckar.

My brave comrades! who among them were now alive, and who were slain? In fancy they all came before me, that brilliant line of horsemen—old Patrick Gordon with gray locks, and eagle eye; the fiery Sir Quentin Home; Viscount Dundrennan, so handsome and gay; Tushielaw, and Raynold Cheyne of Dundargle; the brilliant Chevalier Livingstone d’Angoulême, and other Scottish hearts, all charging holter to holster, and bridle to bridle!

These achievements made my breast swell with agony, and pant with impatience.

The Marquis d'Aytona was so repeatedly baffled by Hepburn's flying column, that the Emperor of Germany, reflecting on his lack of skill, put his finger on a part of the map, saying,
‘ You ought to have anticipated him, by crossing the Rhine there.’

‘ True,’ replied the Marquis ; ‘ but your imperial finger is not a pontoon bridge, and Hepburn, with all his devilish Scots, are not here to cut it off.’

When the last tidings left the army of Lorraine, (as I learned from the envelope of my butter for breakfast,) Hepburn with his regiment of Scots, eight thousand strong, the Cardinal Duke de Lavalette, and Bernard Duke of Saxe Weimar, were besieging the strong town of Elsace-Zaberne, which was expected daily to capitulate ; and in the assault of which Lieutenant-Colonel Robert Hanna of Kirkdale, and other gallant Scots, had left their bodies in the breach. I learned, too, how the government of Louis XIII. watched with growing interest the expected war between England and Scotland, for France yet held—or pretended to hold—to her ancient alliance with the latter. As a proof of this, in 1626, during the quarrel which brought Marshal Bassompierre to England, when the British merchant ships were suddenly seized in all the ports of France, those of Scotland, on hoisting St. Andrew’s Cross above the Union flag, were at once released by the French admirals, and stood out to sea.

These scraps of the French Mercury, which told of politics, war, and battle, and of all the busy life that was still revolving round my silent and solitary prison, were to me a far greater source of interest than the musty miracles of Monseigneur St. Fiacre.

Poor Martin Omelette had now become rather friendly to me, and this served to lighten the tedium of my confinement but when I hinted at a bribe, and strove to tempt him about winking at an escape, he was wont to smile, shrug his shoulders and say,

‘ You are brave, M. Blane ; but wealth and bravery, like a long sword and a long purse, seldom go together. You cannot offer me aught that would compensate for the loss of my head, by the executioner’s sword, in the Place de la Grève—no—no !’

So months wore slowly, heavily, and miserably away. They seemed a long, long unmarked lapse of time, for nothing broke the monotony to me. I had ceased to reckon days and weeks ; but I knew that the spring of 1635 was passing into summer, and I began to fear my poor heart would burst in its throbings after freedom and my home !

All I thought, and all I endured, in those long days and dreary nights, are known only to God and to myself. I had ceased to have a name, or existence.

I was simply NUMBER THIRTY-TWO in the accursed Bastille !

CHAPTER XXXII.

ONE night I had fallen into an uneasy slumber, and without undressing lay on my bed untrimmed and unshaven, for I was fast becoming careless of an existence so monotonous. As usual, I was dreaming of freedom and of home, and I saw the broad blue Dee sweeping on its course, past the old turreted stronghold of the Maclellans ; I saw St. Mary’s Isle, with all its waving woods and ruined pinnacles of the monkish times ; I heard the bell of St. Cuthbert’s ancient kirk, as it jangled in its spire of stone, and the notes of the mavis and merle, as they soared aloft with wings outspread on the glittering air ; and I seemed to feel the pure breeze that came from the purple muirlands, laden with the perfumes of the blooming heather, and the golden broom ; all—all spoke to me of home, and my native land, and I wept in my sleep with joy.

‘Number thirty-two!’ cried a voice.

Suddenly a light flashed into my eyes, and I awoke. Martin Omelette stood before me, bearing a lamp, and in the shadowy background were two female figures masked and muffled.

‘Pardon, monsieur,’ said Martin; ‘but here are two ladies who bear an order to the Governor of the Bastille, permitting them to visit you; so I shall set down the lamp, and wait outside.’

He bowed and withdrew.

As he did so one of my visitors removed her mask, and I recognised the Countess d’Amboise, with her bewitching eyes, her full white bosom displayed as much as ever, her charming embonpoint, her grace and winning sweetness. A golden tress which escaped between the broad hat and mask of her companion acquainted me that she was the attendant Nicola the little Lorrainer.

Clara d’Ische certainly looked dazzling, and her dress was magnificent; yet I gazed at her coldly, for I remembered, that with all her powerful interest she had allowed me to pine a prisoner for months in the Bastille.

‘Alas! M. Arthur, have you nothing to say to me?’

‘Yes, madame—this visit is most welcome—for save the voice of honest Martin my gaoler, no other has broken the solitude of this chamber for months.’

‘Poor Monsieur Blane!’ said the soft voice of Nicola.

‘You knew that I was here, I presume, Madame la Comtesse?’ said I, with some asperity.

‘I knew that you were arrested—’

‘Indeed—I thought so.’

‘Arrested,’ she continued, her hazel eyes flashing, ‘when coming from the house of the base courtesan De l’Orme, in the Rue de St. Jacques.’

‘I merely visited Mademoiselle de l’Orme to deliver six letters from the camp. On my honour I had no other purpose.

‘Keep your own secrets, Monsieur, they are nothing to me. I might have had you released within a week, had I chosen.

‘But you did not choose it, madame?’

‘No.’

‘Alas!—it was very cruel of you. Had any one told me that I should have lived in this place so long without my heart breaking I could not have believed it.’

The Countess gazed at me fully and pitilessly; but little Nicola cast down her soft eyes sadly as I spoke.

‘And was my visit to the Rue de St. Jacques my sole crime?’ I asked furiously.

‘I^t was not.’

‘Then madame will perhaps have the kindness to inform me whether I am indebted to the King or to M. de Brissac for my quarters here?’

‘To Louis of France himself.’

‘But he was most gracious to me when I delivered my standard and the despatches.’

‘He who knows not how to *dissemble* knows not how to *reign*,’ said the Countess, smiling again; ‘tis an old regal proverb—but at that moment the King was in no way interested at you.’

‘My crime—my error, Countess,’ said I, angrily; ‘to the point, madame.’

‘You fell asleep on the terrace at Versailles, M. Blane, under an elm-tree. The King passed near you, and saw the miniature of a lady openly suspended from your neck. He loves pretty women after his own maudlin fashion, and curiosity prompted him to draw near. He recognised my features, and then jealousy urged him to send you *here*, where, but for *me*, you might remain with many others until France hails as Louis XIV the infant son of Anne of Austria; and I fear that your black, curly hair would be silvery enough by that time, my dear M. Blane.

‘ I should attempt to escape, or perish .

‘ Escape!—for what purpose?’

‘ To return home.’

‘ Home—poor M. Blane, you forget—

‘ True, madame,’ said I, clasping my hands; ‘ alas! proscribed and expatriated, I dare not; but I can turn my steps to Holland.’

‘ To make love to clumsy vrows, and Dutch dairy-maids with coarse red fingers—to learn the mysteries of cheese-making and tulip-rearing?’

‘ No, madame! to fight against France, perhaps—to serve under the banner of the Scottish Brigade.’

‘ Hush—if you value life!’

‘ And so this was all my mighty crime—my error!’

‘ Nay, you also committed another most grievous one.’

‘ Indeed! I am all attention,’ said I, bitterly.

‘ You delivered your despatches to the King instead of the Cardinal.’

‘ Heavens, madame! the despatches from the army were for the eye of Louis alone.’

‘ So are his Majesty’s love-letters—yet his Eminence contrives to receive and read them all first. Then why not a mere despatch?’

‘ How many wheels revolve within each other at this wretched court of France!’ I exclaimed.

‘ You were justly punished for your falsehood to me,’ said the Countess, with one of her most seductive smiles, and an artful droop of the eyelid; ‘ for I will not understand all about your visit to the Rue de St. Jacques. But listen,’ she added, laying her soft, pretty hand engagingly on mine: ‘ his Majesty’s private ring has opened up to me every avenue of this terrible chatelet, to the governor of which he had previously sent M. de Brissac with instructions that I was to be obeyed in all things—hence I am here, to free and to forgive you.’

‘ Ah, Madame d’Amboise!’ I exclaimed, kissing her hand

with a greater burst of joy than gratitude at this delightful intelligence, ‘my heart, my life, my sword are yours from this moment.’

I heard a sigh behind me, and turning, met the timid blue eyes of Nicola.

‘Dear Mademoiselle Nicola,’ said I, taking her hands in mine (and plump, warm little hands they were), ‘I have thought of you and your kindness to me often, very often, in my loneliness here.’

I dared not kiss her pretty hands before the Countess; for, with all her loveliness, Nicola was but a waiting-maid; yet there was a difference in the manner and style of these two women that impressed me, and gave me occasion for much grave reflection afterwards.

‘So, M. Blane, I have come to take you from the Bastille, whither the unfortunate work of M. Poussin brought you; and in future, when going to sleep under a tree, pray take care to button up your pourpoint—though never again shall you have a miniature of mine.’

‘It would be needless; my heart bears all that is requisite.’

‘Madame,’ said Nicola, impatiently, ‘the clock of the Bastille is striking two.’

‘Let us go, then,’ said Clara, resuming her velvet mask; and preceded by Martin Omelette and a few other armed officials, we descended the hateful labyrinth of passages, stairs, and corridors to the court of the fortress, where the governor, hastily wrapped in a cloak, stood near the gate to receive the credentials of my release from the Countess, whose face he endeavoured, but in vain, to discover through the holes in her black velvet mask. He restored to me my sword and belt, and a fierce and proud emotion swelled within me as I buckled them on.

‘When free,’ I whispered impetuously to Clara, ‘I will no longer be the slave of a capricious king.’

'Have you quite lost your senses, M. Blane?' said she, placing a hand on my mouth, 'or do you forget the saying of Catherine de Medicis, that walls may have ears?'

'I shall be alike silent and at your service.'

'Come with me to Amboise—the château, I mean.'

'But,' said I, spitefully, remembering my former incarceration in the cabinet, 'what if the King—'

'The King is seriously indisposed; a fever has quite prostrated him.'

'Despite the Queen's pilgrimage to St. Fiacre?'

'And the prayers of Ninon's lover, Monseigneur the Archbishop of Paris—he is very ill.'

'Long may he remain so!' said I, angrily, as I thrust on my hat, and we heard the gate of that detested prison closed behind us.

The morning air was cold. The sky was dark, and the giant mass of that formidable donjon keep frowned gloomily over us, with all its towers and terrors. Nicola trembled and shrunk close to my side. I trembled, too, but it was with joy, ardour, and impatience to be beyond the precincts of that historical prison. I hurried past M. le Capitaine du Chatelet, forgetting even to bid farewell to poor Martin, who had become so attached to me that he actually wept at letting me go once more into the world; and handing the Countess and Nicola into a fiacre that awaited us near the Porte St. Antoine, we were driven rapidly off.

All this seemed a dream to me. Half an hour ago I was asleep in my chamber in the Bastille, and now I was whirled through the dark and empty streets of Paris, past the great arsenal, the Isles St. Louis and Louvier, and along the banks of the Seine; the barriers had opened and shut behind us like magic, for the Countess had obtained the parole from the captain of the watch, and now we were driving among hedges, trees, and fields in the open and star-lighted country. The hands of the Countess were in mine, and her left cheek rested on my shoulder. My heart was full of tumultuous joy, but

not unmixed with alarm, for there were more pleasant positions in the world than finding oneself the favoured rival of Louis XIII.—one who had Bastilles, lettres de cachet, gendarmerie, mousquetaires of the guard, and the devil only knows all what more at his command. Yet I was happy, and, in secret, sometimes pressed the hand of Nicola, who sat silent in a corner, and quite in the dark.

At last the fiacre stopped suddenly, and we alighted at the private entrance of the Château d'Amboise, which was involved in obscurity. Antoine—the discreet and invaluable Antoine—received us, and in ten minutes after I found myself in an apartment familiar to me, and locally known as the Red Chamber.

It was completely hung with red *amboisiennne*—a species of silk manufactured at the old town of Amboise, in Touraine, an ancient fief of the former lords of this château, in whose stronghold, similarly named and situated on the Loire, Charles VIII. of France died, Louis XI. founded the Order of St. Michael, and the Guises planned their formidable conspiracy against the Huguenots in 1560. The silk in the chamber was old and faded; but could it have spoken, it might have told me of a terrible story, for within its four walls was done a dreadful crime. Here perished Monsieur of France in 1471, and with him a lady whom he loved with all the devotion of chivalry.

'Monsieur adored,' says the quaint historian of France, 'a daughter of the Lord of Monsoreau, and widow of Louis d'Amboise, who had for confessor a certain Benedictine monk, named Jean Favre Versois, abbot of St. Jean d'Angely. This wicked monk poisoned a very fair peach, and gave it to that lady, who, at a collation, put it to steep in wine, and presented one half to the prince, while eating of the other herself. She, being tender, died in a short time; but the prince, being of a more robust nature, sustained for some time the assault of the venom, but could not conquer it, and in the end, yielded up his life thereto.' (*De Mezeray*, fol., 1683.)

CHAPTER XXXIII.

IN WHICH I BECOME AN ABBÉ.

NEXT morning we were seated at breakfast in the secret boudoir—that charming little room in which I had first seen the Marquis de Gordon; the Countess was brilliantly attired as usual, and the richness of her dress greatly enhanced the beauty of her fair and ample person. Her eyes shone with unusual lustre, for she had just bathed them in perfumed water; her cheeks had the slightest tinge of rouge; and I thought that I had never seen a finer or a lovelier woman. But she had cost me seven months in the Bastille; and though full of bitterness against Louis XIII., and irresistibly attracted towards Clara, I resolved that nothing more should delay my departure for the army; and on my mentioning this, Madame, notwithstanding all the love-making that had passed between us, offered so little objection, that I felt piqued, and soon discovered that while I was fighting in Lorraine, she had cast her bright roguish eyes on some one else; and this some one I eventually discovered to be the gallant Comte de Treville, captain of the king's musketeers. However, Clara was very cautious not to give me the slightest reason for suspecting this, though I heard from her all the gossip of Paris during breakfast, and all the court news, of both of which important branches of knowledge I was as ignorant as if I had just arrived from the realms of Prester John.

‘To rejoin the army, my dear Arthur,’ said the Countess, caressing my curly head with patronising kindness, ‘you will, of course, require money?’

‘Peste! my dear Countess, I should think so.’

‘Of course, every one requires money, and you cannot be singular in that respect. Here is a purse full enough for your purpose. These are louis d'ors and rose-nobles.’

‘ The best nobles at the court of France.’

‘ Decidedly !’

‘ Ah ! madame, you overwhelm me with kindness. How can I repay you for these many favours ?’

‘ By carefully obeying me, and fulfilling the tasks assigned you by the King and myself.’

‘ Speak, madame.’

‘ From the King, you will convey to M. le Chevalier Hepburn, Marechal de Camp of the Scottish troops, this letter and this case, both sealed with the royal arms of France. These you will place in his hands, before Elsace-Zaberne, which he is now besieging, and which my old friend, Colonel Mulheim, a Lorrainer, is sure to defend until you reach the banks of the Sarre. These from Louis XIII.’

‘ And what from yourself, dearest Countess ?’ said I, taking her soft hands in mine and gazing earnestly, perhaps tenderly, into her fair hazel eyes.

‘ You know my attendant, Nicola ?’

‘ Yes.’

‘ Well ; as a Lorrainer, the poor girl is no longer safe in Paris ; for the same edict by which Cardinal Richelieu is about to enrol fifty-two thousand men for the recapture of La Chapelle, Bohain, and Corbie, which the Spaniards have stormed from those dolts the Picards, orders the immediate arrest of all Lorainers and Alsatians in Paris. Now poor Mademoiselle Nicola is from Nanci—which is her misfortune, but not her fault.’

‘ And how about yourself—your own safety ?’

‘ Though Louis is ill—all but bedridden at present—my position is secure. Nicola is but a waiting-maid.’

‘ But dangerously beautiful.’

The expressive eyes of the Countess became severe and disdainful.

‘ She is faithful and attached to me, poor little creature ; yet I can evade the Cardinal’s edict no longer. She is a

woman, a girl rather, without a legitimate protector, and you are a gallant chevalier. To conduct her to her parents at Nanci must be *your* task.'

'Mine!' I exclaimed, with growing astonishment.

'Yours. So I trust, not to your love for me (*that* I have ceased to believe in) but to your honour, that you will convey her in safety to the gates of Nanci, which you will pass en route for Elsace-Zaberne—and that you will there leave her, without question or query. You promise?' she demanded, fixing her bright and piercing eyes keenly upon me.

'On my honour, Countess,' said I, laying a hand on my breast; 'impatient as I am to leave Paris, to rejoin the Scottish Guard, and to deliver to Sir John Hepburn his despatches, and the baton he has earned so well, I shall not think of playing the lover or the loiterer on the road.'

'C'est bon! I trust Nicola entirely to your honour and to her own discretion. Horses are provided—I have sent for your old nag Dagobert, and you will leave this in an hour.'

'So soon!' said I, kissing Clara's hand, and feeling something of my old love for her reviving.

'Yes—so soon. Moreover, if you execute faithfully and honourably the trust I repose in you, namely, to see this poor girl to the gates of Nanci, my favours will not cease with our separation. I have written to my dear old friend, Monseigneur le Duc de Lennox, who is now at his castle of Tarbolton, and Cardinal Richelieu by the King's command—a command issued at my request—has written to the Scottish minister at Edinburgh, Sir Archibald Acheson of Glencairn, also in your favour; and thus if you obey *me* with fidelity, your estate of Blanerne and all your father's offices of Bailiewick and Captainainrie shall be fully restored to you, and you will be free to return home, unless,' she added, with one of her old coy glances, 'you find attractions greater in France.'

‘Madame, I have no words to thank you! but will the Cardinal be successful?’

‘Can you doubt it? Mon Dieu! it is but a small request to make of this *sieur* Acheson, and the Scottish government, after the late release of all their ships, when those of England were detained and sold at Havre, Brest, and Calais.’

The arrival of a visitor, whose gilded carriage preceded by two liveried valets, powdered, armed and mounted, halted under the *porte cochere*, cut short the reply I was about to make, and the Countess, after permitting me to give her a farewell kiss, consigned me to the care of Antoine, bidding me adieu with a kindness which showed that though she meant to discard, she had no intention of forgetting me entirely.

Antoine brought me the dress of an abbé—the usual costume of a gentleman when travelling at that time; and under the cassock I placed my belt, with a pair of loaded pistols and a good dagger; while a pair of petronels were to be slung at my saddle-bow.

‘Mademoiselle Nicola,’ said Antoine, introducing the Countess’s attendant, whom in her new costume I had some difficulty in recognising. She wore a dark religious dress, with a little hood and wimple, a long veil, and a large cross. The demureness of her appearance contrasted forcibly with the youth and exceeding beauty of her face, and the luxuriance of her bright golden hair. Her complexion was pure; her lips a divine coral hue, and her features were cast in the purest mould of form. Her loose sleeves revealed the whiteness of her arms, and gave her hands a smallness almost infantine as she approached, and with great frankness held both out to me, while her upward glance was timid and earnest, but confiding.

‘Welcome, Nicola,’ said I, closing the last button of my long and sombre cassock; ‘it seems, my dear little daughter, that we are about to set out on our travels together, as a nun and an abbé.’

‘Yes, monsieur,’ said she, with a slight blush, as her long brown eyelashes drooped; ‘and I trust we shall conduct ourselves with due religious gravity and—propriety.’

‘Do not doubt it. I am an abbé of some place unknown; but you, I presume, have some order to claim?’

‘Oh yes, M. Blane. This is the dress of the *Hôpital des Sœurs de la Charité*, for the relief of the sick and poor, founded by Father Vincent de Paule, a priest whose life has been one succession of good deeds, for he has everywhere founded hospitals for the sick, the aged, and the poor; and King Louis, by letters patent, has just instituted his new priory of the Lazarites. Father Vincent has collected, among the pious of Paris, one hundred and sixty thousand livres, and sent them into Alsace and Lorraine, to lessen the misery of those peasantry who are afflicted by the war, and the presence of—’

‘Such fellows as I, mademoiselle.’

‘Everywhere he is worshipped as a saint, though not yet canonised, and my dress of his order will protect me, if the circumstance of my being his favourite god-daughter will not.’

‘But, my dear little Nicola, your beautiful voice will be quite spoiled by the hideous accent of Alsace, where they say *Sdratzpurg* for Strasbourg, and so on.’

‘M. Blane,’ said she, looking me full in the face, while her clear bright eyes filled with emotion, ‘if you propose to continue this spirit of gallantry or banter during our journey, I shall leave you at the first gate of Paris, and pursue my way alone.’

‘Nicola, you are quick as gunpowder; but in what character do we travel? Father and daughter?’

‘No, brother and sister.’

‘By Jove! a dearer relationship would save trouble immensely. Oh, pardon—pardon me, Nicola,’ I added, as her cheek reddened and her eyes sparkled with anger; ‘on my honour I will offend you no more.’

Antoine now announced that our nags were waiting at the postern, and in half an hour after this we had passed through Paris together, Nicola mounted on a stout and plainly-trapped little horse, and I on Dagobert. About mid-day we passed the last barrier, and took the road to Meaux, furnished duly with passports addressed to the various lieutenants du roi, or deputy-governors, of which every fortified town in France had one.

CHAPTER XXXIV

MY PRETTY PENITENT.

'THIS is passing strange!' thought I, as we trotted along the highway towards Meaux, the cathedral spire of which rose above the mosses of the *ville* on the right bank of the Marne; 'here am I, Blane of that Ilk and Blanerne, a Chevalier of the Garde du Corps Ecossais, and so forth, acting gentleman usher to a French waiting-maid—a squire o' the stirrup to a wandering damsels, and that damsels a soubrette!'

And yet, as these irritating and ungenerous thoughts occurred to me while peeping at my companion from time to time, I became impressed by the grace with which she managed her horse, by her youth, her beauty, and loveliness; and, above all, by a purity of thought and choice of language in her conversation which convinced me that Nicola was somewhat better than she seemed; and from some remarks she let fall, I discovered that her father was a reputable citizen of Nanci, whom the fortune of war had forced into the ranks of Duke Charles IV; that her mother was dead, and her stepmother, to whom she was returning, disliked and illused her.

I have said again and again that Nicola was lovely; but as the hours of our companionship were prolonged, and as we

rode side by side between the long green hedgerows, the blooming orchards and graperies that bordered the banks of the Marne, and were ripening as the spring grew into summer, I began to discover new and dangerous graces and attractions—a lofty bearing, an enchanting purity, that would have graced even the vaunted Marie Louise of Lorraine, of whose far-famed beauty Nicola seemed very proud, and of whom she spoke a hundred times during our pleasant journey, often ridiculing, I remember, the manner and character of Wolfgang the young Count Pappenheim, to whom Charles IV meant to marry her. Thus I began to forget the waiting-maid, in the little sister of the hospital, and daily took more care of my toilet, pointing up my moustache, curling my hair, &c., &c., striving to appear to the best advantage in her eyes, with what end I scarcely knew.

We passed Meaux, of which the illustrious Bossuet was then bishop, and rode on, chatting and laughing, and quite forgetting to visit, in our characters of an abbé and sœur de la charité, the famous shrine of St. Fiacre. *Ouf!* the very name recals to me the image of Martin Omelette, and that devilish old historical chamber in the Bastille, from which he was so loth to release me! We lodged at a quiet little inn in the marché, where Nicola's costume, as a follower of Father Vincent of Paule, won her every respect and attention from our host, while my moustache and sword obtained the same from madame the buxom hostess, who soon 'detected the man-at-arms under my cassock,' as she told me with a smile.

A ride of twenty-three miles next day brought us to Château Thierri, an old town of the eighth century, having a castle of Charles Martel on a hill overhanging it, and in this direction we progressed, as I chose a route pretty far to the left of the main road to Lorraine, being—for various reasons—desirous of avoiding the line of march formerly taken by our army.

Here we put up at an auberge, opposite to the house in which the celebrated De la Fontaine was born. The people

being old Huguenots, who remembered the wars of the League, were somewhat crusty, and loth to admit two passengers attired as Nicola and I were ; but a twist of my moustache, and a display of that which is the most convincing argument in the modern world and in practical philosophy, *money*, silenced all their scruples, and we were immediately accommodated with apartments.

Epernay, where Marechal Biron was killed by a cannon-ball, was our next halting-place ; and there at our inn we saw a picture of Guilleriz, the famous robber, who built a castle in the wood of Gralla in Brittany, where, after being besieged by five thousand men, he was taken prisoner, and broken alive upon the wheel in 1608. Now, as Epernay lies only fourteen miles south of Rheims, I began to perceive that we were travelling a little too fast, and that the time when I must part from my delightful companion drew nearer by every hour and mile.

CHAPTER XXXV

IN LOVE WITH A SOUBRETTE.

‘NEITHER virtue nor vice consists in passive sentiment—but in *action*.’ I remembered this maxim of Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, and resolved to be actively good, and to thrust the Countess from my heart for the future ; never considering, at the time I applied this trite saying of M. Marcus to myself, it was merely the image of Mademoiselle Nicola which was gradually effacing that of Madame d’Amboise.

Propinquity, no doubt, had much to do with this new fancy which hourly grew upon me ; besides, the young heart is decidedly opposed to existing in a state of vacuum, and loves novelty and variety ; hence, the moment one bright image passes away, another occupies it ; thus as the distance between the Countess and me increased, the greater grew my interest in Nicola—but then, Nicola was only a soubrette !

Now as all that lovers say—but here as yet the love seemed all on my side—is deemed very prolix, vapid, and foolish, by the wise and matter-of-fact people of this world, I will not attempt to rehearse the various little conversations by which Nicola and I beguiled the way. One or two I may insert, as I know that such conferences are not without interest to the fairer portion of mankind; and with them I have the honour to agree in all things.

‘Mademoiselle,’ said I, after a long silence, as we approached Chalons, ‘I am so happy to be with you!’

‘I am equally glad that Monsieur is pleased.’

‘How can we ever part, Nicola? When the time comes, I shall be the most wretched man in Lorraine.’

‘A gallant man would have said “in the world,”’ she replied, with a waggish smile; ‘but will not M. l’Abbé have his prayers to attend to?’

‘By Jove! my dear girl, then I shall have to pray in my helmet and boots, like a bishop of Cahors.’

I observed, however, that unless my remarks savoured of the merest commonplace, of the scenery, the towns we passed through, or of the war which had cast us so oddly together, she was usually silent; and whenever I attempted to become tender or complimentary (and then only with a timidity for which I could not account), she betrayed a mixture of cloudy reserve, or quick irritation, which, if not very artful in a soubrette, were decidedly perplexing to me.

She was a singularly seductive girl; and with all my growing love for her, I began to fear—I knew not why—that she might be playing some deep game with me; and at one time this idea was strong in me—the more so when I remembered the peculiarly artful and intriguing character of the person who had confided her to me—the Countess, her late mistress. Yet when I gazed upon her pure, pale brow, and into her quiet, deep, and trusting eyes, thoughts that were gentler, kinder, and more loving filled my heart. Poor little Nicola!

In my attentions to her, as I became more delicate, or pointed, which you will, the more reserved did she seem, and the more anxious to hasten on her journey. This only served to pique me, to whet my interest and curiosity, and to render me more perplexed as to her real objects and character ; and I observed at Meaux, Château Thierri, Epernay, and other places, when we put up at an inn or hostelry, she studiously secluded herself from me in her own apartment, and pleading fatigue, whether falsely or truly I knew not, rarely took even a meal with me ; and never appeared until our horses were again at the door, bridled and saddled for us to resume our journey.

I observed, that whenever I spoke of the Countess, her cheeks were wont to flush, and her usually gentle blue eyes to sparkle with an anger which she was at little pains to conceal —thus betraying an impatience and irritation very remarkable in one generally so soft in manner, and gentle in disposition.

‘ Now what may all this mean ? ’ thought I ; ‘ is my little soubrette in love with me herself, and jealous of the Countess ? Courage, Arthur Blane, and probe this other mystery.’

On the road towards Chalons, while traversing one of those broad and beautiful valleys which intersect Champagne, I spoke with such unreasonable admiration of Clara d’Amboise, that tears actually stood in the fine eyes of my companion.

‘ This Countess—,’ I faltered, beginning to deprecate, but not knowing what to say.

‘ Countess—silence ! ’ said Nicola, with beautiful scorn. ‘ speak no more of her, and let me endeavour to forget the hated companionship and collusion which I had with her—circumstances in which the force of political events involved me.’

‘ Do you speak thus of your old mistress ? ’

Nicola laughed, and then grew angry again. ‘ My mistress ! ’ she reiterated ; ‘ my poor M. Blane, you are a very good kind of creature—’

‘*Mademoiselle*,’ said I, with a sombre bow, ‘I thank you for your patronage.’

‘But you know not whom you address, whom you speak of, or what you say.’

‘Such a spoiled child it is! we have become suddenly quite angry on one side, and quite stupid on the other it appears. But this Countess d’Amboise seems to be quite your *bête noir* Nicola.’

‘Silence!’ said she, becoming angry again, and with her riding switch giving me a smart tap over the bridle hand—so smart indeed that had not my thick military glove protected me, I must have dropped both curb and snaffle reins. ‘Silence, and say no more of this.’

‘Of what?—you quite puzzle me!’

‘Thank Heaven, yonder are the spires of Chalons!’

‘You early warned me to beware of the Countess, dear Nicola.’

‘Well.

‘One night at a gate of the Louvre when I was a sentinel, opposite the Hôtel de Bourbon.’

‘Do you remember what I said?’

‘Could I forget anything in which Nicola bore a part Well—I took your advice—I saw her no more.’

‘Many thanks for such condescending acquiescence; but M. Blane will please to remember that he marched from Paris, as I foretold, next day. How far are we from Chalons?’

‘About six miles.’

‘Thank Heaven!’

‘Why this thankfulness again?’

‘Because this hateful—odious journey will soon be at an end.’

‘Hateful?’ said I, anxiously.

‘Yes—exceedingly so!’

‘You are weary of me, dearest Nicola,’ said I, attempting to take her whip hand.

'Weary of your conversation, at least,' said she, giving a second switch over the fingers; 'and unless you can find a more entertaining subject than the beauty, wit, et cetera, of the French king's avowed mistress, please to speak no more.'

I began to fear that I had gone too far; but whence all this pique? Did this charming enigma—this beautiful girl—really love me, and feel her little heart swell at the thought of rivalry? I could neither answer this question, nor account for the strange timidity with which her manner infected me.

'Pardon me, mademoiselle,' said I, urging Dagobert close to her side, and venturing to kiss her hand—and this time the switch was *not* raised—'I will not say more until you address me.'

'Then, you shall be silent long enough, I promise you.'

She was evidently in a furious pet; thus we rode in silence into Chalons, and were then one hundred and three miles from Paris. I stole a glance from time to time at Nicola, and to my great perplexity perceived that she was in tears; but amid the bustle of Chalons, the examination of our papers by the suspicious guard at the gate, and my anxiety to find, in a strange city, a suitable hotel, I could not refer to our past and peculiar conversation, or to the delightful inferences I drew from it.

Chalons lies between two spacious meadows on the river Marne, which divides it into three parts—the town, the isle, and suburb; and high over all its mansions towered the spire of St. Stephen. The streets were wide and bordered by trees, the ramparts were strong; the ditches deep and broad. Sir Andrew Gray, of Broxmouth in Lothian, a veteran Scottish soldier of fortune, was governor, and his garrison consisted of two fine battalions of the *regiment de Normandie*.

OUR JOURNEY TOGETHER.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

OUR JOURNEY TOGETHER.

We put up at a quiet auberge in the suburbs—such a place as I usually chose. It was kept by a reverend-looking old man, who told me that he had been a soldier in the wars of the League, and was the comrade of Nicholas Poussin in the regiment of the Vicomte de Tavannes. The moment we entered this auberge, Nicola, as usual, retired to her chamber, and on this occasion without even bestowing on me the sweet smile and farewell bow, or waving to me a kiss with her pretty hand, according to her usual wont when we separated for the long hours that must intervene until the morrow ; and this pained me more than I could have believed the coldness or slight of any girl would do—especially a girl in her position.

That night I was very sleepless and miserable.

Love should be pure, true, and humble ; for true love, as the Scripture saith of charity, seeketh not its own ; and such, I hope, was mine for this French girl. I watched the chamber where Nicola slept, and listened to her soft breathing through the door, which was slightly ajar. I saw the shadow of her curtained bed thrown by the night lamp across the floor, and I would have given the world (as the phrase is) to peep in and see her dear little face as she slept ; but if discovered, the intrusion would have been deemed an unpardonable offence by one so proud, so pure, and modest as Nicola ; so I lingered without—listening, watching, and hoping I scarcely knew what

I counted the miles, the days, and hours of our journey, past and those to come ; and reckoned the time at which she must leave me—when we would separate, and, too probably, never to meet again. This approaching fate greatly enhanced the delight I felt in the society of Nicola, and I returned to bed, full of strange thoughts.

'Either I am of a singularly inflammable nature,' said I while turning restlessly on my pillow, 'or by what magic or miracle, other than her beauty, does this girl so fascinate me?'

I had asked myself this question a hundred times before.

Then there was that proud reserve and occasional constraint of manner, which in a soubrette—and especially the soubrette of so gay a beauty as the Countess d'Amboise—were so difficult of analysis; and for which, even the peculiarity of our positions—a young man and a beautiful young woman, unwedded and unrelated, travelling thus together, and apart from all the world, could not entirely account.

Why did I not fall in love with this girl in Paris, when I had a thousand favourable opportunities for entangling her in one of those countless intrigues which make the sum of human life there? Simply, because I had never thought of it when there—and our positions were then altogether different.

Besides propinquity, which causes half or perhaps nearly all the love affairs in the world, daily companionship, and the country, are all peculiarly adapted to develope and foster the tender passion. Isolate any two young persons of opposite sexes together in the country for a short season, and if they are passably handsome, and their hearts previously unoccupied, some mysterious principle of animal magnetism will infallibly draw them nearer to each other; and a very decided flirtation, if not an actual passion, will be the result. Thus, in the country, when wandering with a young and pretty companion, she will become all the more interesting, because we see her face and hear her voice alone, without being contrasted with the faces, voices, or manners of others; and surrounded by the blue sky, the bright sunshine, the green fields, or the shady woods, a thousand new charms and graces that were unheeded before will develope themselves. Away from the bustle of towns, camps, and garrisons—away from the glitter, gloss, and buzz of life, our thoughts will run, as it were, all to one focus; imagination gets fuller and freer

play, all the impulses of the heart are more joyous and pure; and thus a girl on whom we might scarcely have bestowed a thought had we met her in the bustle of the world, may become a very divinity, enshrined by a halo of such beauty as the eye or fancy of a lover alone can see.

But Nicola was charming enough to have attracted attention even amid the court beauties of Louis XIII.; thus it was very natural to expect that I, in whose protection she confided, and on whose friendship and honour she relied, should feel a dangerous interest in her, during our solitary journey through Champagne and Lorraine to the frontiers of France. Alas! I could neither know nor foresee all the bitterness this growing passion, which I so heedlessly fostered, would yet cost my heart.

At breakfast, next morning, my attention was attracted by a silver medal which the maître d'hôtel wore suspended from his neck by a little steel chain. It proved to be one of those struck at Rome by order of Pope Gregory XIII., to eternise the infamous massacre of St. Bartholomew; and as the existence of such a memorial is but little known in my native country, I may as well describe it.

It bore the destroying angel, his right hand armed with a sword; his left arm bearing a cross; below him were several figures with their throats cut, and around was this motto:

‘*Hugonetorum strages, 1572.*’

‘Were you engaged in that scene of blood?’ I asked, with a lowering brow.

‘Yes, monsieur, in some manner, I was.

‘But that was sixty-three years ago.’

‘Well, M. l’Abbé, I am just sixty-three years old.’

‘And you were engaged in a massacre when a year old—what a blood thirsty young imp you must have been!’

‘Monsieur, I was born on the very day of the massacre. Listen to me. There was a fleuriste in the Rue de l’Arbre

Sec : does Monsieur happen to know the Rue de l'Arbre Sec, at Paris ?

‘ Perfectly.’

‘ Ah—there are always pretty girls there !’

‘ Well—about your fleuriste ?’

‘ In that street, there was one named Jeanette Lavardin, very pretty and very much admired by all the gallants of Paris, who frequented her little shop and bought kisses and flowers ; for in those days every cavalier carried a nosegay ; but unfortunately poor Jeanette was a Huguenot ; and on the day of the massacre, after the King's Guards, led by Monsieur d'O, their colonel, had so barbarously slain the Comte de la Rochefoucault, who was grand huntsman and hereditary master of the royal wardrobe, the Marquise de Renel, Francourt the Chancellor of Navarre, and more than two hundred other gentlemen, who had sought shelter in the Louvre, all smeared with blood, and panting for fresh slaughter, they issued into the Rue de l'Arbre Sec, and murdered Jeanette, though she sank on her knees, and implored them to save her life, saying that she was not in a fit state to die. One mousquetaire made her promise to be a good Catholic, which she accordingly promised, and was instantly stabbed by swords and poignards, to prevent her, as the destroyers said, relapsing into heresy ; and then they departed to seek new victims.

‘ Next day, when the Catholics were throwing all the bodies into the Seine, they found that the murdered Jeanette in her death throes had given birth to an infant. Many persons were deeply moved by beholding a birth under circumstances so appalling ; others were for throwing “the Huguenot's brat” into the river with its dead mother ; and for that fell purpose the poor naked youngling was seized by one of Colonel d'O's soldiers, but was saved by a gentleman of the Scottish Guard of Charles IX., who threw his velvet mantie over it—so this child lived to be a man, and has now the honour of addressing you ’

‘A strange and terrible story!’ said I: ‘and this gentleman of the Scottish Guard—’

‘Was the bosom friend of the King of Navarre — the Chevalier Blane.’

‘My father!’ I exclaimed with joy.

‘Yours, Monsieur l’Abbé!’ exclaimed the maître d’hôtel, almost embracing me: ‘your father! tell me, then, is this brave chevalier alive?’

‘Alas, no! he was slain last year in cold blood; but I shall yet avenge him, if ever I tread on Scottish ground again!’

CHAPTER XXXVII.

A HAUNTED FOREST.

Beyond Chalons we rode for several miles in silence, for Nicola seemed to be still displeased with me, and I felt a sadness and irresolution for which I could not account, for this girl exercised a strange and powerful fascination over me; but now, a storm which came on suddenly was the fortunate means of bringing us to a satisfactory explanation, somewhat after the fashion of the regal lovers in the *Aeneid*, save that we conducted ourselves with much more propriety than Dido and her demigod.

About dusk we found ourselves somewhere on the borders of Lower Champagne, near a large forest, amid the dingles of which we had lost the right path; and now the darkening clouds, with the oppression of the atmosphere, forewarned us of what was approaching. No house or village appeared in sight; every way the forest tracks seemed to be lost in a wilderness of trees. On a rock overhanging the forest stood an old castle, at which we expected to find shelter or a guide; but it proved to be a roofless ruin, destroyed probably in the wars of the League; and two or three men, whom we had seen

lurking near it, disappeared on our approach, and accorded no response to my shouts. This suggested the unpleasant idea of robbers ; and my hitherto brave little companion grew pale as the darkness increased, and I carefully examined the pistols in my girdle and the petronels at my saddle-bow.

In her anxiety Nicola forgot her displeasure, and prattled and spoke to me again, keeping her horse close to my stirrup : for every minute my hand was required to catch her bridle, as the brambles and stones rendered the animal restive and liable to stumble.

Once a wolf bayed near us, and she uttered a faint scream. The French forests were full of those animals. De Mezeray tells us that, in 1437, wolves occasionally darted through the city barriers, and devoured children in the Rue St. Antoine at Paris ; and all the world knows of ‘the terrible wild beast’ which appeared in the forest of Fontainebleau and ate one hundred and forty persons alive, before it was killed by M. de Brissac and twelve of the king’s musketeers.*

‘ Do not be alarmed, dear Nicola,’ said I, ‘ for I have four bullets and my dagger at your service.’

‘ These will avail you little, M. Blane, against a herd of wolves.’

‘ Well—a herd might, perhaps, prove rather trouble some !’

‘ Or a band of robbers—like those of Guillirez !’

‘ The devil ! My dear mademoiselle, do not think of such things : yet I would rather face the robbers than the wolves.’

‘ Indeed ! do you hold your life a thing of little price ?’

‘ Now ; I hold it, dear Nicola, exactly at the value your interest in me gives it.’

‘ A very pretty compliment, M. Blane ; but do not press

* So lately as 1765, the forest of Soissons was full of wolves. An ordinance of Henry III. directed the lords of manors to have a general hunt every third month.

my hand so, pray : and ah, my heaven ! there is lightning coming to increase our annoyances ! Moreover, this forest is haunted ?

‘ By what ?

‘ A spectre.’

‘ The deuce, mademoiselle ! a real spectre ?

‘ Yes.’

‘ Come now, Nicola !’

‘ A tall, lean, ghastly man with a dreadful visage.’

‘ With wolves, robbers, and spectres for companions—a dark forest, rain, thunder, and wind—we shall pass a pleasant night ! now the torrent begins to patter on the leaves ! my poor little Nicola, you will be quite drenched.’

‘ Mon Dieu ! it was in this forest, that Charles VIII. of France was warned of his approaching death,’ whispered Nicola, shuddering.

‘ Warned—by what ?’

‘ The spectre—the demon who haunts it.’

‘ Ouf ! we are to have a demon too ! How came it to pass ?’

‘ Charles VIII. was marching home from the conquest of Naples, and was passing through this wood, accompanied by Anne of Brittany his queen, and the Lady Beaujeu his sister, when suddenly a tall and ghastly form like a skeleton, having a long white beard and enormous red eyes, started from among the bushes, and grasped the royal bridle, exclaiming with a shrill voice, like the whistling wind—

“ Stop ! O King, whence go you ?”

“ To Paris !” answered Charles, boldly ; “ but why ?”

“ Because you are betrayed—beware of the orange-tree !” replied the spectre, and vanished, for no trace of him could be found by the King or his company. Charles therefore became alarmed, and tarried till all the Scottish Guard, under the Lord Bernard Stuart d’Aubigne came up, and with these he passed through the forest in safety ; but the terrible visage of

'he spectre was ever before him ; so that he lost his senses soon after, and died of a poisoned orange.'

Nicola also told me that, in the local superstition of the peasantry, the forest was the haunt of a malevolent female spirit known as La Bête Havette, who lived in wells and springs (like that watery spirit which haunted our friend St. Fiacre), and was wont suddenly to pour its fury upon children, drowning them, as the kelpies are said to do in Scotland. Here, too, was heard St. Hubert's hunt, when the yelling of fiendish dogs, the clank of hell-forged fetters, and mournful cries swept at midnight over the tree tops, and died away in distance, as the demons bore off the souls of the damned to punishment ; for such the terrified peasantry believed the passing flocks of wild geese to be ; but at last, as the darkness increased, Nicola became terrified by her own legends ; she ceased to speak, and kept close to my side.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

WHAT HAPPENED THERE.

THE darkness of the sky and the denseness of the interwoven foliage overhead, made our whereabouts so obscure, that our horses stumbled at every step, till dismounting, I led them by the bridle. There was a strange stillness in the air ; the rain fell in large warm drops which plashed heavily on the broad eaves of the summer forest ; the green, ghastly lightning at times lit up the long dark vistas, glancing for an instant on the old gnarled trunks, imparting to them a freakish and grotesque aspect that terrified Nicola, who began to consider herself rather rash in having rehearsed that very far from lively historiette or episode in the life of his Majesty Charles VIII. in such an alarming locality ; and as the thunder rolled

and hurtled above us, every moment nearer and more near, she was all palpitating with terror like a little bird, when I wrapped my cloak round her, as an additional protection from the fast falling rain.

I now became seriously anxious to find a place of shelter for her. A night in the forest, exposed to all the discomfort of a storm, and to the real and imaginary terrors of such a place, might prove, I feared, too much for the constitution of a girl so delicate by nature, and so tenderly nurtured as Nicola had been.

While I was in this state of perplexity, we discovered a cavern, or deep fissure in a mass of ivy-covered rock close by us—the same rock on which the old castle stood. The bridle of Dagobert, whose equanimity (never very great at any time) was rather ruffled by the thunder, I buckled to the branch of a tree. Entering, I examined the place by firing my pistol among some dry leaves, and thus creating a momentary light, found it to be a complete alcove in the rocks, full of the withered spoils of the last autumn. I led in Nicola, placed her in a comfortable nook, and after securing the horses close by, in such a manner that to break loose or escape would be, for them, impossible, I rejoined her; and there we sat, hand in hand, in that dark rocky chamber, listening to the wild storm that bellowed without, and watching the gleams of lightning that flashed and glared on the stems of the summer forest.

I had my pistols at hand, prepared for any emergency; and making for Nicola a bed composed of dry leaves and our mantles, I besought her to be composed, and to endeavour to sleep; but she pressed my hand gently, and declared herself to be too much alarmed and too excited to think of sleeping; and there we were alone, at night, in that old haunted forest on the borders of Champagne.

I pressed her dear and tiny hand from time to time, and occasionally there was a response, which sent a thrill of hap-

pines to my heart ; then she crept closer to my side, **for the** darkness was intense, and the uproar of the elements **without** was somewhat appalling.

As we sat there, the deep, hoarse, solemn murmur of the wind, as it rose and fell, had in it something very impressive. At times it wailed like the mingled voices of a vast multitude ; then it chafed among the tossing branches like the waves of a distant sea, in fierce and sudden gusts ; anon it would die away, and we heard only the hiss of the rain that poured so ceaselessly down on the leaves of the drenched forest. At times strange sounds seemed to mingle with the passing wind. I deemed these to be the cries of affrighted wolves ; and often sat pistol in hand, lest some of those dreadful denizens of the wild should find our place of shelter, and rush headlong in.

The lightning that came in brilliant and quivering flashes revealed the rugged outline of the cavern-mouth, and the wet dingles which stretched away in vague and dark perspective ; and the whole scene, with all its concomitants, was so terrible, that Nicola drew her hood over her eyes, and at times drooped her forehead on my shoulder. She was faint with fear, and weary by fatigue ; and, being a good little Catholic, I heard her muttering her prayers from time to time. Moreover, she made a vow, if she escaped all the terrors of the night, to visit the most renowned shrine in Lorraine, that of St. Lucy the Scot at St. Michel.

Then she uttered a faint cry, and clutched my arm !

A thunderbolt—a blazing ball of fire—which seemed to fall with a startling roar, and by its own specific weight, struck at the mouth of the cavern, a large tree, a strong and ancient oak, that had stood perhaps for a hundred years, and dashed it to pieces, cleaving it, like a mighty wedge of flame, to the roots in a moment. For a time the sulphureous odour was stifling ; but it subsided at last, and with it the terror of my trembling companion.

'We are quite safe, Nicola,' said I, placing an arm gently round her

'Safe—you think so? Ah! M. Blane, make a sign of the cross, just once—to please me.'

'Mademoiselle, in me it were a mockery,' said I; 'for my forefathers were the first to follow the precepts of the Lollards of Kyle.'

'Then their descendants should make amends, by being the first to follow mine. You deem it, as they did, Popish likely? What matter how you name it, or they named it; for, be assured, it is the sign of Heaven: and I shall make three over you,' said she, waving her pretty hand thrice, in the dark, across my eyes and brow.

'Dearest Nicola!'

'If you press my hand thus, I shall take the liberty of withdrawing it. St. Ephrem says, Look at the little birds, when they stretch out their winglets *cross-wise*—lo! they straight ascend towards heaven; but when they fold them, they fall panting and breathless down to—where?'

'The earth, I presume.'

'Yes—then think of these things.'

'Dear Nicola, I can think only of you.'

'When you have seen Marie Louise of Lorraine, you will think of me no more.'

'Peste! my dear Nicola, I have no desire to see your Mademoiselle Marie Louise; nor shall I trust myself near the dangerous vicinity of her or her people, at least until I exchange the costume of an abbé for the iron trappings of the Garde du Corps Ecossais.'

'And we shall have parted at the gates of Nanci?' said she, in a low voice.

'Ah, Nicola,' I replied, 'you know not how the anticipation of that parting wrings my heart!'

I sighed, and drew her close and closer still to my breast: she made no resistance; but I was conscious that she wept

bitterly, and this secret emotion moved me deeply, and brought my passion to a height.

‘ Nicola,’ said I, abruptly ; ‘ will you marry me, dear Nicola ? Oh, you do not know how much—how tenderly, I love you !’

‘ Marry *me*—a poor soubrette—*you*, a chevalier of the King’s Guard—one of the proud noblesse of the Guard du Corps Ecossais !’

‘ Yes—I, Nicola.’

‘ Oh, monsieur, you must not speak in this way, or think of such a thing ; I am only a poor girl !’

‘ Why ?’

‘ What would the army—what would all Paris, say ?’

‘ I will marry you with joy, Nicola, and take you home to my own dear country. The Countess—’

‘ Countess again !’

‘ Pardon me, dearest, I am not about to praise her, but merely to say that she has promised that through the powerful interference of Richelieu and King Louis, the cruel act which proscribes me shall be rescinded ; and I know she will keep that promise. At home, I have lands, broad acres of corn and meadow, that lie by the banks of the Dee ; I have fell and forest, a tower and hall, where your merry laugh shall make the echoes joyous again ; and all that I have, with my heart and love, will I share with you, Nicola,’ said I, borne away by the honest ardour of my passion, and the impulses of youth.

I felt her tremble still more, and her tears fell fast upon my cheek.

‘ Were I to admit that I loved you, would you be more devoted to me ?’

‘ Impossible ! I could not be more devoted than I now am.’

‘ Oh, silly M. Blane ! I heard you once say nearly the same thing to that woman d’Amboise.’

‘No more of these memories, dearest Nicola, or I shall sink with shame !’

‘Then let us be silent !’

‘Nay, nay ; say that you love me—that you will marry me,’ said I, in a whisper ; ‘speak, Nicola, speak ! for this suspense and silence are torture !’

‘It may not, cannot be ; our ranks in life are unequal, and our paths lie far apart.’

‘Love, marriage will make them one.’

‘Never !’ she replied, in a broken voice ; ‘our paths in life must, I repeat, lie far, far apart.’

‘Nicola !’

‘I am but a poor little soubrette, a penniless girl of humble origin ; and how would your proud Scottish kinswomen, with all their crests and quarterings, receive me, if they knew of this ?’

‘It can never be known, Nicola ; and as the wife of my heart, the lady of Blanerne, I can find strong hands and steel blades enough in Glenkens to force the proudest peer in Scotland to vail his bonnet to you !’

‘Force him ! and this is one item of the happiness you would offer me. That I love you, monsieur,’ said she, weeping, ‘let these hot tears attest, but cease to speak more of love or of marriage to me. Such visions can never be realized ; I could never brook the humiliation you would prepare for me ; for I have much of pride and hauteur in my heart—albeit, you deem me so timid, meek, and gentle. I will strive to be your friend ; but this love I shall conquer, crush, forget perhaps.’

‘When ?’

‘When we separate ;—alas ! I cannot hope to achieve this fatal end while I remain with you.’

‘No—no, Nicola !’ said I, pressing her to my heart, as the tenderness and ingenuity of this admission, with the plaintive softness of her voice, touched me inexpressibly ; ‘you shall

never succeed in being so cruel as to forget the pleasant days of our companionship, and the love we have avowed.'

'It may be so.'

Then there ensued a long pause, and we continued to sit in darkness and silence, hand-in-hand, our hearts and lips united as our thoughts; until at last, overcome by agitation and fatigue, Nicola feel asleep—asleep upon my breast!

Such a strange thing it is, this love.

I had met Nicola, and left her; met her again and again, to leave her, without other thought than that she was beautiful; she had been nothing to me then; but from the time that love began to spread its halo round her, she seemed as necessary to me as the air or the sunshine, yea, as life itself. We seemed now to have but *one* existence, and the marvel to me became, how had I lived, and breathed, and spent so many years without her; and without discovering that her place in the world of my heart had been vacant. It is very mysterious all this; but every lover has the same idea, or he is no lover at all.

My whole being seemed now inspired by a new joy; and I no longer remembered how time had passed with me before this fountain of passion had welled up within our souls with the first kiss we exchanged in that dark cavern, which, with all its attendant terrors, had so suddenly brought our emotions to a crisis: and so passed our night in the old haunted forest of king Charles VIII.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

WHAT HAPPENED AFTER.

WITH night and darkness the storm passed away, and, when morning broke, no trace of it remained but the torn and twisted branches, the thunder-riven oak, and the diamond-like dew, that dropped from every leaf, and bowed the laden grass.

Nicola awoke refreshed, but I was pale, weary, and excited:

the livelong night I had not slept, having sat by the side of my companion, watching and half-supporting her, full of happiness, and of many thoughts, some of which made me anxious enough at times. But I kissed the sleeping eyes of Nicola, and forgetting all but that she loved me, I proceeded to groom and re-saddle our poor nags, which had borne the terrors and discomfort of the past night with all the equanimity of old troop-horses.

Flocks of those little birds of the woodcock species, known in France as chevaliers aux pieds verts, were fluttering about in the misty swamps and little tarns formed by the torrents of rain that had fallen overnight ; the startled hares and rabbits bounded from among the wet leaves, and fled before us as we mounted and set forth from our comfortless billet ; and steering through the forest by the direction of the sunbeams, sought once more the way which led towards Lorraine.

We soon found it, and passing into that hostile province, left behind us the fertile plains of beautiful Champagne. Our first halt was at Vaubecourt, on the left bank of the Aisne : it is a fief of the princes of Lillebonne, who are a branch of the house of Lorraine. Nicola gazed wistfully at the gilded spires of the quaint château, saying she had friends there, who would gladly receive her.

‘But I promised to see you as far as Nanci?’ said I, with a tone of disappointment and anxiety.

‘True,’ she replied, with tears in her eyes ; and we rode on in silence and sadness, oppressed by our own thoughts ; for we were now approaching the place and the day of our final separation.

My heart was perplexed by its mingled joy and sorrow. How delightful it was to be convinced of the entire love of this gentle creature, and hear her sweet and winning voice give me timid assurance of it again and again ; but how bitter was the knowledge that a day was at hand when I should hear that voice and those assurances no more !

In her manner there was a soft tenderness which a lover alone could detect, and it filled me with delight. She had so fully avowed a reciprocity of regard that now I had nothing more to urge on that point; save, that we should *not* separate at Nanci—for to that parting I looked forward with a sincere and acute sorrow. I strove vainly to forget that it overhung me, and for a time to be happy; for when gazing upon Nicola, the delightful consciousness of proprietary in that charming form, and community of sentiment in her affectionate heart, filled me with exalted and joyous emotions.

This love for Nicola, which in me had sprung up so suddenly, strengthening with intimacy, and the length of our journey, was the first true passion of my heart, which hitherto had never known aught of an emotion so absorbing.

Never before had the thought of a woman—of a mere girl—come between me and the great desire of my soul—honour and fame in the French army; but now I thought only of Nicola, and of spending my life with her, and for her alone.

I strove to study, to estimate my real emotion for her, and the probable duration of it. Was this love misplaced? Reason said it was. Cold Reason! Yet I loved her, and love levels everything; but this passion ran full butt against a thousand old social (or anti-social) prejudices which had formed the leading principles, the life, the second religion as it were, of my family for centuries—never to wed one of a blood, or name, or race inferior to their own!

Nicola was but a waiting-woman—the soubrette of the French king's dissipated mistress—and yet I loved her with all the heedless ardour of a boy.

Rank and name, pride, prejudice, and pedigree, with all their old heraldic quarterings and mummery, what were they to me, but something to lay at the feet of this charming French girl when I said that I loved her?

For some miles of the way Nicola had been very sad; but something in the spirit of the above paragraph, which I had

infused into my conversation, raised her spirit, and she rallied as we approached St. Michel.

‘Dear Arthur,’ said she, patting my bridle-hand, while a beautiful smile lit up her loving blue eyes, ‘you have a princely heart! I would that I were a countess—yea, even mademoiselle of Lorraine for your sake.’

‘The beautiful Marie-Louise?’

‘Yes—even the beautiful Marie-Louise—she who is deemed so proud, so artful, and intriguing.’

‘Wherefore?’

‘Because you could not say or sacrifice more for me, a poor girl, than I would then do for you, a simple gentleman.’

‘Listen to me, Nicola. Lovely as this princess, the bride of Count Pappenheim, is famed to be, high though her race, and splendid her fortune, I would not give one golden hair of your beautiful head, Nicola, for Louise with all her rank and splendour.’

‘Dear, kind, and loving Arthur?’ said she, smiling through her tears; ‘but I ought not to love you.’

‘Nicola?’

‘It is very true—but too true.’

‘And why?’

‘For many reasons more than I dare to say. One I may mention—’

‘Name it. But already you have named so many.’

‘You are a Huguenot—I a Catholic.’

‘Well, and what of that?’

‘Tis an error in faith my doing so; but I fear that we poor women are all pagans in the question of duty when it jars with love.’

‘Then kiss me, my beautiful heathen.’

We were now close to the gate of St. Michel, and, alas consequently only thirty miles from Nanci, and we felt more triste than ever.

CHAPTER XL.

THE DAUGHTER OF MACBETH.

THE old town of St. Michel, the capital of a bailiwick of the same name, now rose before us on an eminence. The banner with the three fleur-de-lis waved above its ramparts, showing that French troops occupied it, and they proved to be a squadron of Roger de St. Lacy's dragoons. Louis XIII. had first taken this little barrier town, the seat of the Parliament of Lorraine during the war of 1632, but restored it again by the treaty of Livourdin. It was now chiefly noted for a splendid Benedictine monastery, where the reliques of St. Lucy the Scot were brought for preservation from the church of Mount St. Lucy, which stood near the Rhine, some miles distant.

The silvery mist was rising from wood and hollow as we approached the town. The green leaves glistened in the sun, and the long, graceful willows waved in wind, which rustled the chestnut foliage.

We breakfasted at a hamlet situated in a dell near the Meuse : and after showing our credentials at the gate as an abbé and daughter of Father Vincent de Paule, we rode straight to the Benedictine abbey, at the outer porch of which we dismounted ; and then, leaving me with the horses, Nicola, with a sweet smile, a graceful nod of her pretty head, and a promise not 'to tarry long,' entered the magnificent old Gothic church of St. Bennet. Having buckled the bridles of our horses to iron rings in the walls, I sat for some time on the stone bench of the portal, lost in reverie, before I became aware that an old priest, in the usual dress of a French ecclesiastic, with a little black silk calotte cap drawn over his

white hairs, had seated himself at my side, and was regarding me with attention.

I bade him good morning, for the day was yet young.

‘Bon jour, M. l’Abbé,’ said he, ‘but by your bearing I do not take you to be an ecclesiastic.’

‘Indeed?’

‘Monsieur will excuse me, but such is the case.’

‘How?’

‘Abbés do not sit with one leg over the other, or play with their moustaches, neither do they usually wear a sword, for such are not conventional customs.’

‘But I am travelling, and find a warlike aspect advantageous at hotels and barrier-gates; and then we all know that Monseigneur the present Archbishop of Paris was the best swordsman in France.’

‘Except the Chevalier Hepburn.’

‘Yes.’

‘Ah! of course; except our countryman, the Chevalier Hepburn.’

‘How! our countryman?’ I asked.

‘I detected the Scot as well as the soldier, sir,’ said the old man, smiling and pressing my hands. ‘I presume you belong to the French army?’

‘Perhaps I do; but you are very inquisitive.’

‘Do not be alarmed; though I live in the territories of Duke Charles, I am Father Allan Colville, a priest of the Scottish college founded by Gregory XIII. at Pontamoussin, some miles from this, in the bailiwick of St. Michel, and have no interest in the quarrels of kings and dukes, though the young Prince of Vaudemont, who has a fancy for me, made me custodian of the reliques of St. Lucy, before which your companion is now at prayer. The sister of Vincent de Paule is your wife, I presume, in disguise?’

‘No,’ said I, colouring to the temples.

‘Your sister, perhaps?’

'No,' I repeated, with increasing vexation; 'the exigencies of war force us to travel together, though we are neither kith nor kin.'

'Pardon me,' said the padre, adding (to change the conversation), 'perhaps you know that St. Lucy was a country-woman of our own?'

'Like St. Fiacre, I suppose; but you must excuse my ignorance, for I never heard of the good lady until to-day,' I replied, with a smile.

'She was the daughter of a king.'

'I am rather sceptical on these points, father,' said I, smiling again, 'for in France all the ancient saints are sons or daughters of kings, counts, and emperors. Sanctity in those days was increased by rank.'

'You will find in Camerarius and in the French Breviary that she was the daughter of a Scottish king, of Macbeth the Usurper; who, to atone for the crimes of her father, after escaping from the castle of Dunsinnane, retired in 1160 to serve God in obscurity. Wandering from our native land she reached the banks of yonder river, the Meuse, and choosing a solitary place, a wooded mountain in the diocese of Verdun, there built unto herself a cell, where she died, in 1190, in all the odour of sanctity, and was enrolled among the saints by the Bishop of Verdun, Henry of Blois, otherwise called of Winchester, brother of Stephen king of England. Great pilgrimages have been made to her reliques, which in the summer season are kept in the church of Mout St. Lucy, erected in her honour in 1625 by a prince of the house of Guise, who espoused a sister of the present Duke Charles IV.'

'This is a curious story,' said I; 'but I suppose these reliques are only a few bones.'

'Heaven pity thee!' exclaimed the old priest; 'bones, quotha! I would that you were one of the ancient faith to see the saint as we see her—to see her as if she died but yesterday.'

'Indeed!'

‘ Her body is completely enclosed in a transparent coffin of the purest Venetian crystal, and therein she lies, robed in white, looking lovely in her virgin purity, for in death her features resumed all the bloom of youth. Her tresses are of the brightest gold ; her features are soft and placid ; the long lashes of her eyes are closed, imparting a charming expression of modesty and repose to her sleeping face, and a virgin crown encircles her brows. Her hands, small and delicate, are crossed upon her breast ; one retains a golden chalice, the other her crucifix ; and when prayers of more than ordinary purity are raised to heaven at her shrine, her lips have been seen to smile, and a shining brightness to spread over her face and robes—a light that filled the beholders with extasy and awe. Moreover, through the pores of that crystal coffin there cometh at times a fragrance—a delightful perfume, like that emitted of old by the body of Polycarp, the early martyr.’

‘ And she was a daughter of Macbeth ! By my soul, I would give a louis to see all this.’

The priest shook his head.

‘ And her body is quite undecayed, you say

‘ Less so than yours or mine,’ retorted the priest.

‘ And yet she died—’

‘ More than five hundred years ago.’

‘ Excuse me, Father Colville, but really—’

‘ You think this strange ; but does not Volterranus tell us of the body of a young girl—fair, delicate, and beautiful—being found in a Roman sepulchre during the pontificate of Alexander VI. ?’

‘ Very likely ; but I do not believe in Volterranus.’

‘ He says, that she was enclosed in a marble chest : her loveliness dazzled all ; her hair, which was long and flaxen, was gathered upon her head by a tiara of shining gold. At her feet stood a burning lamp, the light of which was extinguished by the atmosphere on the vault being opened. And, by an inscription on her tomb, this fair young girl proved to be

"Tulliola, the best-beloved daughter of Cicero ;" but because she was an unbaptized pagan, Pope Alexander ordered her body, so wonderfully preserved, to be cast into the Tiber, which was done accordingly. But to return : our shrine of St. Lucy was visited, in 1609, by the Duchess of Lorraine—a lady of the house of Mautua.'

'The mother of the present Prince of Vaudemont.'

'No; the mother of his half-sister, the famous Mademoiselle Marie Louise, who is now in Paris. It was also visited with great solemnity by his present majesty Louis XIII., when he was besieging St. Michel four years ago; and on that occasion his favourite, Madame d'Amboise, laid all her rings and bracelets on the shrine. It is to be visited by Mademoiselle of Lorraine, after her marriage with Count Pappenheim—an event to which I look forward with a somewhat selfish interest.'

'Why?'

'Because the wedding-dress of the bride is to be my gift, as keeper of the reliques.'

From this musty garrulity and monastic gossip, of which—with a mind so preoccupied—I felt heartily weary, I was relieved on Father Colville being summoned by an old Benedictine; and just as he retired, my attention was attracted by a handsome and well-appointed cavalier, who, with two valets, like himself well mounted and armed, rode hastily up to a large tree which stood before *La Pomme d'Eve*, an auberge opposite the abbey. Imperiously summoning the landlord, he called for wine, but without dismounting.

Something in the air of this young spark, and in the cock of his feather, seemed familiar to me; and, on approaching, I recognised the young Marquis de Toneins, camp-master of the Regiment de Normandie, and son and heir of the Marechal Duc de la Force.

CHAPTER XLI.

STARTLING TIDINGS.

‘ And let me the canakin clink, clink !
A soldier’s a man ;
A life’s but a span ;
Why, then, let a soldier drink ! ’

I HUMMED the song of the subtle Iago in the *Moor of Venice*, and, like him, adding—

‘ Some wine, ho ! ’ stepped towards the tree under which the Marquis and his two followers were regaling. The latter stared at me with the usual insolence of liveried valets, until their master raised his hat, exclaiming—

‘ Pardieu ! who do I see ? M. Blane of the King’s Guards—M. Blane here, and dressed as an abbé ! ’

‘ Yes, Marquis—but so dressed, for a time only.’

‘ A strange garb for the king’s most faithful soldier—and his rival too, at times, if all tales be true.’

‘ Marquis, permit me to observe that your remarks are very unwise.’

‘ Letters from Paris could tell us nothing about you—you were keeping your whereabouts so very quiet, that it was rumoured in the Garde du Corps Ecossais, you were about to become ridiculous.’

‘ Marquis ! ’

‘ By marrying and becoming quite a respectable person.’

‘ A false rumour, on my honour ! ’ said I, reddening as I remembered the conversation in the forest last night ; ‘ but what have you to tell me of the Garde du Corps, Marquis ? Who are dead and who alive now ? ’

‘ Faith I can scarcely tell you ; but I do not think the mirassiers muster above seventy-five now. They have been carrying themselves with glory, these lords of the creation.

and playing the devil in Alsace and on the Rhine. You delivered my letters to Marion de l'Orme?’

‘ Yes.’

‘ And how was the little one looking?’

‘ Divine as usual.’

‘ Bon! did you see anything of Madame la Duchesse de Charost?’

‘ The beautiful divorced—no.’

‘ Yet you were all winter in Paris!’

‘ I was studying, my dear friend.’

‘ Studying—you?’

‘ Studying practically the interior economy of your French prisons.’

‘ Tête Dieu! I don’t understand you—but your life in Paris seems to have been very circumscribed.’

‘ Because it was confined to an upper chamber of the Bastille.’

‘ The Bastille—diable!’

‘ I expected that exclamation; the prince of darkness being the potentate usually applied to by such wild gallants as you.’

‘ But let me hear all about this; for even at this distance from Paris, the Bastille has a very alarming sound.’

I told him my story, at least so much of it as I deemed prudent to reveal; and contrived to lay all the blame of my captivity to the score of De Brissac’s jealousy.

‘ So when you reach Paris, M. le Marquis,’ said I, in conclusion, ‘ do me the favour to rip up a little of M. de Brissac’s skin. I owe him a peculiar grudge for the part he played in my affair, and especially for his manner of playing it. Do this for me; I shall follow suit if he escapes you, and if I live to see the old towers of Notre Dame again. I had no time to give him an airing on the Boulevards, or at Montmartre, before leaving Paris, being ordered off on such short notice—moreover, he never leaves the side of Marion de l’Orme.’

Mort de ma vie ! then I am wholly at your service,' said the Marquis, whose eyes sparkled with anger at this information.

'Believe me, I shall be ready to do so much for you again.'

'I always deemed De Brissac to be an unsophisticated country Benedick, who luxuriated at his petit château near Versailles, and was actually in love with his own wife. So, so—he has been at the Rue de St. Jacques. Peste ! I shall give him a wholesome horror of that locality after I reach Paris.'

On this matter these sparks really fought near the ferry of the Nesle. De Brissac afterwards became involved in the plots formed by the King's dissolute and libertine favourite, Henri de Cinq-Mars against Richelieu in 1642; but the Cardinal played his cards with his usual skill and subtlety, for Cinq-Mars perished on the scaffold at Lyons, and De Brissac was broken on the wheel in the Place de la Grève at Paris. But I am anticipating.

'This is the finest wine I have tasted since I crossed the Rhine,' said the Marquis, setting down his cup and gathering up his reins ; 'ere long I shall be in my native province of Champagne, and then I shall have such wine as hath never been pressed in Germany since Father Noah planted the grape and conferred on mankind the benefit of getting drunk. And now farewell ; I am bound to Paris, with despatches from the Marechal-Duke, my father. In a week I shall have kissed Marion, thrown myself at the feet of Charost, run De Brissac through the body, danced with the girls at the Hotel d'Argent, and given a benefit to those at the Hotel de Bourgogne. I shall have coquetted with all the fleuristes on Pont aux Colombes ; got drunk at the Fleur-de-lis ; rattled the bones of Beelzebub in a dice-box with Ferte Imbault, and Heaven knows all what more. 'Tis said this war will soon be over, for Richelieu has discovered and sent to the Bastille, Mademoiselle de Lorraine, whom he will

probably marry perforce to some French peer. Thus Louis XIII. will easily bring the Duke her father to terms, it is thought. But, apropos, before we part, let me warn you to beware how you venture near Nanci.'

I had been glancing anxiously from time to time at the porch of the Benedictine church, in expectation of seeing my devotee appear; and I had soon tired of the harebrained young Marquis, whose light conversation savoured so much of Paris and the old style of the French camp. It bored and disgusted me after the pleasant days I had spent in the pure and virtuous society of Nicola; but now his warning interested me.

'I am to avoid Nanci, you say—why, Marquis?'

'It is full of the enemy.'

'This is indeed unfortunate for me.'

'Rather, as it lies in your front. While my valiant papa, the Marechal-Duke, was occupying himself near Strasburg, Charles IV., with his son, the Prince of Vaudemont, and that young fire-eater, Wolfgang Count Pappenheim, with four thousand chosen troops, crossed the Rhine by a bridge of boats, and reaching the old capital of Lorraine by a forced march, are now actually holding high festival in the ancient palace of the duchy,'

'Parbleu! I must be careful—being under orders, or promise rather, to see a lady to the gates of Nanci.'

'A lady?'

'Yes.'

'From whence?'

'Paris.'

'Peste! is she pretty?'

'I cannot say—she is an ecclesiastic.'

'Nom d'un Pape! and do you think to make me believe that you have travelled all the way from Paris with a pretty woman, without seeing so much as her face? Very likely, M. le Garde Ecossais!'

At that moment, Nicola in her sombre g. appeared at

the huge Gothic porch of St. Bennet, where she looked around her irresolutely.

‘ Oho, M. l’Abbé,’ said the reckless Marquis, ‘ there is your little penitent awaiting you. Pleasant this ! by my faith, I shall doff the corslet, and don the cassock too—but a safe journey to you—au revoir !’

‘ Adieu !’

I raised my hat, and, followed by his two attendants, the Marquis galloped gaily down the road which led towards the forest wherein Nicola and I had passed the night.

On joining her, she greeted me with what was almost a caress ; and whether it was the effect of her devotion I know not, but now she seemed placid, content, and even cheerful—yet my heart was still wrung.

‘ To-morrow we will be at Nanci ; and on the morrow after we will be parted, Nicola, parted to meet no more,’ said I, lifting her into her saddle.

‘ My dear, dear Arthur,’ said she, bending her face close to mine ; ‘ your accent and expression tear my heart with sorrow—you doubt me—oh ! what shall I say, to convince, and to reassure you ?’

‘ Why should all this be, Nicola ; listen to me. Here are a church and a priest,’ (Father Colville was at that moment waving to us an adieu from the porch,) ‘ why cannot we marry ? Here is a ring too—it was my mother’s, Nicola. ’Tis but a few words—“ with this ring, I thee wed—this gold and silver I give thee—and with all my worldly goods, I thee endow,” and then heaven alone could separate us.’

‘ Poor Arthur ! your gold and silver, as yet, the pay of a Scottish cuirassier ; your worldly goods in France, the dust of a day’s march. Yet would I wed you,’ she added, while her tears fell fast and hot ; ‘ but I have others than myself, to consult, others who would rather see me in my grave than the wife of soldier of fortune. Our ranks are unequal ; and I—with all your present love—would wed but future misery.’

‘ Oh ! Nicola, and have you no trust in me ? What mean you by *present* love, and *future* misery ?’

‘ Would you rejoin the proud, fiery, and haughty Garde de Corps Ecossais, with a French soubrette as your bride ?’

‘ No—we would quit France.’

‘ Does not this admission show there is a shame to shun ?’

‘ A shame, Nicola !’ I stammered.

‘ Yes—and what of the Countess’s promises to you—are they as yet fulfilled ?’

‘ Alas ! no.’

‘ And your despatches for M. le Chevalier Hepburn ; are they as yet delivered ?’

‘ True—true ; but the dread of losing you renders me desperate, and blind to everything.’

‘ Enough, dear Arthur—let us talk of this no more.’

‘ Yet, Nicola, for you I would risk any danger ; for I love you, as I have never loved any woman, since I buried my poor mother, who sleeps far away from me, in the old church yard at Glenkens.’

As if she dreaded her own resolution, Nicola whipped up her horse, and muffling her face, and, as I thought, her sobs, in her hood, rode on. I followed, and thus we sorrowfully left the gates and ramparts of St. Michel behind us. I informed her of the risk we ran—I at least—as Nanci was full of the troops of Duke Charles, and of Wolfgang Pappenheim, his intended son-in-law.

She expressed joy to hear that the brave old Duke was in possession of his hereditary home, which, as she was a Lorrainer, was only natural and proper ; but she shuddered at the name of young Pappenheim, who, to all his father’s brilliant courage, united the cunning of the fox with the pitiless ferocity of the tiger.

CHAPTER XLII.

VAUDEMONT.

As we proceeded, we hourly heard of the terrors and ravages committed by the Count de Bitche, colonel of the petardiers of Lorraine, a man steeped to the lips in crime and sin ; and by Wolfgang and his imperial corps, a Croatian regiment, upon those Lorrainers who had made terms with Cardinal de Lavalette, with Hepburn, or La Force ; and more especially upon those who had supplied the troops of those leaders with forage, food, or money Some were broken alive on the wheel, others shot or hung, according to the whim of their captors ; and rumour affirmed that the young Prince of Vaudemont went hand in hand with his future brother-in-law in the committal of these atrocities, especially in Alsace, the duke of which was a mere child of nine or ten years old From her recent residence in Paris, Nicola believed that she had everything to fear from the terrible Croats, and grew paler than a lily, when, near Commercy, a town on the left bank of the Meuse, we passed a row of men hanging by the neck upon trees by the wayside, with their visages black, swollen, and frightful, exposed to our gaze, and to the ravages of a flight of bloated ravens that were wheeling round them.

At Commercy, which is celebrated only for the manufacturers of those little cakes called Madeleines, we saw the noble château of the Princes of Vaudemont, an open, black, and roofless ruin, just as it had been left by Lieutenant Frank Ruthven, of Ramsay's musketeers, who had crossed the Meuse one dark night at the head of eighty Scots, stormed the gates, and burned the seat of the heirs-apparent of Lorraine.*

A night in the forest, exposed to the inclemency of such a

* It is now a French cavalry barrack.

storm, had not improved the condition of our horses, worn as they were by so long a journey; and Dagobert, whose old military hardihood a winter passed in the snug stables of the Château d'Amboise had considerably impaired, was especially cut up: thus, after a slow and tedious ride of some miles, I found it necessary that we should halt at a little wayside auberge, about a league beyond Commercy. The host, though reluctant at first to admit any stranger, so great was the terror inspired by Pappenheim's Croats, and the Duke's Imperialists, was ready enough to afford us quarters on perceiving our ecclesiastical garb, in his simplicity believing that, in case of foragers or plunderers coming that way, we might give a little protection to his household—a vain hope indeed.

Nicola was so sad, weary, and reflective, that I did not again renew the ever-present subject of my thoughts and of the past day's conversation, but I kissed her tenderly at the door of her apartment, and bade her adieu for the night, adding that I would summon her betimes on the morrow, which would be the *last* day of our journey together.

Alas! I knew not that it was the last time I should ever see her again—as my beloved Nicola at least.

Over a stoup of wine, I sat moodily in the recess of a window of the little auberge, recharging my pistols to keep them in service order; and then I watched the setting sun, as he sank in all his summer splendour, and cast long golden gleams across the wooded dell, through which flowed the waters of the Meuse, when the report of shots close by gave me an *alerte*, and inspired me with an irresistible and unwise desire to discover the reason thereof. I ordered out my horse, thrust the pistols into my girdle, and mounting, rode leisurely along the highway for half a-mile or so, until I saw the cause of the alarm. A few troopers were galloping over an eminence, bearing each a couple of sheep across his saddle, while a cloud of smoke, streaked with flame, arose from th-

crumbling walls of a farmhouse, which in mere wantonness they had set on fire.

'If 'tis thus Duke Charles celebrates his temporary return to Lorraine,' thought I, 'his people had better bend their necks to Richelieu and King Louis.'

Turning my horse's head, I rode leisurely back at the same pace towards the auberge, till at a turn of the road, which was bordered by high green hedges, I came abruptly upon two cavaliers, mounted, and armed with sword and pistol. As the path was narrow, we simultaneously saluted each other, and drew up to reconnoitre; for the time, place, and politics, made us alike wary and suspicious.

'Sabre de Bois!' exclaimed a familiar voice, using that exclamation which in France is old as the Crusades, and means a cross or sword of wood; 'I think I should know that face and figure. Oho, M. Blane! we have changed guises since we met last year at Sezanne. 'Tis thou art now the abbé and I the layman. By St. Nicolas of Lorraine, but this is very droll!'

The speaker was the Prince of Vaudemont, and I heard him with mingled anger and irresolution.

'Shall I recal the advice, the threat you made me, on that day at the hotel in Sezanne?'

'You may, M. le Prince; but what was it?'

'Simply this: *Retire; leave our vicinity; this espionage is not honourable, and you test me too far.* Those words were well calculated to rattle in a heart so proud as mine. Do you remember them?'

'I do.'

'And then you threatened to denounce me and poor Raoul d'Ische, whose soul, I hope, has long since gone to glory. Why should I not denounce you, and deliver you to the nearest provost-marshal?'

'For two sufficient reasons, Monseigneur le Prince.'

'Name them.'

‘First, you are too accomplished and brave a soldier to do an act of wanton cruelty; and I am, also, I hope, too accomplished and skilful a swordsman to let any two men in the army of the Empire deprive me of this weapon, which is now my sole inheritance.’

‘Milles demons! thou art a gallant fellow, and I love this spirit well; but nevertheless I must have you; so we will fight it out fairly on the sward here, and my aide-de-camp, the Count de Bitche, will be our umpire.’

‘With pleasure,’ growled the Count, through his enormous moustaches.

‘Agreed,’ said I, bowing to that ruffianly noble, whom I had given such good cause to remember our meeting in the cavalry charge at Bitche; and his sinister eyes, as they gave me a fierce glance of recognition, flashed like a sword-blade when it is suddenly drawn from the scabbard. ‘My life has been risked and jeopardised so often, that when night sets in, I feel at times astonished to find myself still in the land of the living. But, prince, lest I should fall in this encounter, give me your word of honour,’ said I, sadly and impressively, ‘that you will fulfil my last injunctions.’

‘My dear fellow, I have not the least desire to kill you. Mordieu! not I; but I must disarm and take you prisoner.’

‘Not if I can prevent you, but should aught fatal to me occur, will you, as a gentleman, promise to conduct safely and honourably to the gates of Nanci a young girl of Lorraine, whom I have brought with me from Paris, and who is now——’

Where?’

‘At a little auberge in yonder hollow near the Meuse.’

‘Where three willow trees overshadow the water?’

‘Yes.’

‘On my honour as a gentleman I will do this, faithfully and truly.’

‘Prince, I thank and believe in you.’

The Count de Bitche, a fierce-looking fellow, with a dark and sinister expression, uttered a most unpleasant laugh ; upon which I gave him a scornful glance of defiance, and bit my glove. We had now reached a smooth piece of sward, a little way aside from the high road ; a grove of chestnut trees grew half round it ; the evening light was clear ; in the distance lay Commercy, with its spires standing in dark outline against the blood red disc of the setting sun. We all dismounted, and gave our bridles to the Count de Bitche, who linked them to his own. We then threw our hats, cloaks, and gloves, on the ground ; buttoned up our pourpoints to the throat, drew our rapiers, and stood on guard, De Bitche keeping near the Prince to prompt and give him hints : thus he was doubly armed against me ; but my heart was too full of hope and pride to find space for fear.

I prayed for victory only that I might return to Nicola, who knew so little of the danger I encountered, and whose dear, modest face and loving eyes I might never see again.

Our swords met, clashed, and for a moment were engaged to the very shell ; then we withdrew, watching each other warily, blade pressed heavily against blade. The Prince, a skilful swordsman, made a feint on one side, and then a lunge on the other, by which he ripped up an inch or two of my sword-arm. Now, as my skin is a ware upon which I set some value, I became filled with sudden fury, and pressed him with such vigour, that he was driven back, fighting hard, almost to the chestnut trees.

‘ At him with your rapier *a la stoccata* ! ’ said De Bitche, who had drawn his dagger, an unwarrantable proceeding, and his voice grew husky as he spoke, ‘ I’ll betide you, Prince ! be wary, or he will nail you to a chestnut tree.’

‘ Silence, Count ! ’ I exclaimed, ‘ or, by Heaven, I will nail you first ! ’

He slunk back to where the horses stood, and in an instant after I heard a snort, almost a cry, from one of them, and

casting a glance that way, saw Dagobert plunging fearfully This unusual circumstance so fully arrested my attention, tha' I narrowly escaped being run through the lungs; bu recovering my guard, before the Count could withdraw his useless thrust, I grasped his rapier by the cross, wrested it away, and for a moment menaced his throat with my point; then I stepped back breathless with excitement and fatigue.

The pale face of Vaudemont flushed crimson with shame and vexation. He uttered a fierce oath.

'Conquered again, and by you too—this is too much! I shall never again be able to hold up my head.'

'Nay, monsieur,' said I, bowing low, and presenting ω him his sword-hilt; 'let us be friends from this time forward; and be it understood, that on whatever field we meet again, you and I, at least, engage no more.'

'So be it, M. Blane,' said he, grasping my hand with the sudden cordiality of a generous heart; 'we part friends; and in this half-hour's encounter, you have taught me some tricks in fencing which I shall not soon forget. Adieu—return to your pretty one at the auberge, and conduct her, yourself, to the gate of Nanci; but promise me, that you do not enter; for if taken prisoner there, even I may fail to protect you, as in Nanci, at least, the Duke my father reigns supreme.'

He saluted me; leaped on his horse, and, followed by his amiable aide-de-camp, the Count de Bitche, who gave me a peculiar and malevolent smile, galloped away.

CHAPTER XLIII.

'DAGOBERT, you devil of a nag,' said I, stroking his fine head; 'you nearly caused a kind master to lose his life, by making such an uproar.'

Gathering the reins I prepared to mount, when suddenly

the animal snorted again, and swerving round in an unusual manner, nearly fell upon his haunches. Blood on the grass now attracted my attention ; and, to my astonishment, I found that the poor animal was wounded in the off hind-leg, and by a slash from a sharp instrument, was irretrievably hamstrung !

I remembered the malevolent expression that lighted the eyes of the wicked Count de Bitche ; and that I had seen him near my horse with his dagger drawn ; I remembered also, the wild snort and plunge, given at that moment by the animal, a movement which, by startling me, so nearly caused me to lose my self-possession and life together ; and my heart filled with anger and compassion, at the cruelty of this barbarous Imperialist ; for the noble horse was destroyed by a mutilation, beyond the skill of farriery to cure ; and as I wiped, with my handkerchief, the moisture caused by agony in the fine eyes of my beautiful Spanish barb, I felt a tear start to my own ; for I knew that now poor Dagobert must die. I thought of my pistols to end his misery —

‘ No, no, Dagobert—another must do this sad office for you. My old nag, you and I have been too often under fire together—we have too often shared the same meal, the same biscuit, and the same bed of straw, for you to die by my hand. Another shall do this, and place the greenest sods above you too.’

And thinking thus, I led him slowly, halting and with difficulty, along the road, which he marked with blood, towards the little inn that lay in the valley of the Meuse, intending to have him shot and buried there by the aubergiste, to whom I would give my saddle and holsters for his trouble.

Thus I lost a charger, the gift of Clara d’Amboise, and worth at least six hundred crowns of the sun.

On the morrow I meant to conduct Nicola to Nanci ; and there, in my own name and character, to enclose to the Duke of Lorraine, a solemn challenge to the cruel and infamous Count de Bitche. Full of these fiery thoughts, and pausing

at every two or three paces, for my poor horse moaned in its agony, I proceeded slowly along the narrow path between the hedgerows, and under chestnut-trees in full foliage, towards the auberge; and as I went, the darkness grew deeper, for the sun had long since set. The stars studded the sky; and between its wooded banks, the Meuse gleamed like a silver current, as the round white summer moon rose above the hills.

At the door of the wayside inn (a grotesque-looking house of carved wood, with its upper windows opening from a steep roof, which was buried under a load of woodbine, honeysuckle, hops, and ivy) I was met by the old aubergiste, with fear and wonder expressed in every feature of his otherwise rather stolid visage.

‘Oh Monsieur l’Abbé! Monsieur l’Abbé!’ he exclaimed; ‘and so you are not killed after all?’

‘Killed—no.’

‘Nor even wounded?’

‘No; but why do you ask?’

‘Because—but where is mademoiselle, your sister—that dear, pious daughter of Vincent de Paule?’

‘Asleep, in her chamber, I presume; but what mean you by all these questions?’ I demanded, while a vague emotion of alarm agitated me.

‘Mademoiselle, about half-an-hour ago, was told that you had been attacked on the road, and left dangerously wounded; that you were dying, in fact, and had sent for her; so she instantly went with them, in search of you.’

‘With them!—with whom, fellow?—and who told her all this?’

‘M. le Comte de Bitche, who came hither hurriedly and clamorously inquiring for the young girl of Nanci, whom an abbé had brought from Paris. He gave her these dreadful tidings, and sadly terrified and grieved the poor little thing became; but she threw on her hood, and hastened to you.’

‘Accompanied by whom?—speak fellow, speak!'

‘M. le Comte, and two other gentlemen of Monseigneur de Vaudemont’s suite’

‘Eternal infamy! it has all been a decoy—a snare! Oh, Nicola, Nicola! what insanity prompted me to leave you, ever for a moment? Was the Prince with them?’

‘No monsieur, no,’ replied the aubergiste, trembling.

‘Which way did they take her?—towards Commercy?’

‘No; towards Nancy.’

I was about to spring on poor Dagobert, but remembered his mutilation, and perceived at once the whole details of the trick which had been played me by the Count de Bitche, on hearing my request concerning the safety of Nicola—a request made so solemnly to Vaudemont before we fought. And so she had been carried away by this brutal and unscrupulous noble, whose forcible abduction of the beautiful Countess of Lutzelstein was so notorious throughout all Germany and France; a crime which was followed by another more terrible; for the corpse of that unfortunate lady, who had been savagely strangled, was left ignominiously stripped in the woods near his castle in Lorraine; and in her hands was found a portion of a velvet pourpoint, which she had clutched in her dying struggles, and which, by its remarkable lacing, was known to have been worn by the Count.

And Nicola was in *his* power!

‘The Count is a sorcerer, Monsieur l’Abbé,’ said the aubergiste, imploringly; ‘so beware what you do; He is said to attend the sabbat in the forest of St. Michel; he anoints himself with the fat of unbaptized children; he dries up the milk of poor men’s cattle, and turns the gold of the rich into birchen chips; and he has an ointment which he puts on his eyes, to enable him to see where treasure is hidden. It was thus he found the gold which Charles VII. buried in his old *Rendezvous de Chasse*, in the forest of Loches, where it was guarded by a dragon. Beware, M. l’Abbé, beware! or at least do not name *me*; for I am a poor man, whom he would

think no more of hanging than he would of drinking a cup of wine.'

Heedless of all these warnings, on foot I rushed along the road, with my sword drawn, but night had now closed in, and objects had become vague and indistinct. I placed an ear on the ground to listen, but heard only the throbings of my heart; my whole brain seemed to have become one huge pulse. Nicola, whom I might never see again, seemed before me, with all her thousand winning ways, her beauty and her gentleness, her modesty and timidity—Nicola subjected to the rude advances of this brutal and licentious lord!

My heart grew sick!

It was too much to think of—too exasperating a subject for contemplation; and half-blind with rage and grief, I rushed along the Nanci road, which stretched far away before me, lonely and silent in the light of the rising moon.

Thus Nicola was lost or taken from me; and all the injunctions from the Countess, and my responsive promises, came back to my memory with a glow of shame and mortification, for, by my own neglect, I felt that I had forfeited my honour, and would be disgraced in the estimation of them both for ever. But these reflections were altogether secondary to the horror I experienced at the idea of her being subjected to captivity by such a man as Rudolf de Bitche; and now, when I had lost her, oh! how paltry did all my vile conventional scruples about her humble birth and position seem to me! Poor, beloved girl!

And now the song of Bernard de Ventadour, the sweet minstrel who followed Elinor of Guienne, occurred to me:—

‘I thought my heart had known the whole
Of love; but small its knowledge proved;
For still the more my longing soul
Loves on, itself the while unloved.
She stole my heart, myself she stole,
And all I prized from me removed
She left me but the fierce control
Of vain desires for her I loved!’

‘ How lonely, voiceless, and silent seemed that moonlit landscape to me then !

Nicola was indeed gone !

* * * * *

CHAPTER XLIV

TAKEN PRISONER.

In my cloak-bag at the auberge I had left the king’s dispatches, addressed to Sir John Hepburn and to the Duc de Lavalette, together with the case containing the baton of a marshal of France, destined for the former ; but I forgot everything, save the desperate hope of rescuing Nicola and of tracking her betrayers.

I made a hundred vows of vengeance on De Bitche, whom I was one moment resolved to challenge to a solemn duel ; and at another, to pistol without ceremony when or wherever I met him.

A group of dark figures on the roadway now appeared about half-a-mile before me ; and the gleam of steel informed me that they were armed. I hastened forward full of new hope and a fierce joy. Some of those persons were on foot, and others on horseback ; their number seemed to be about twenty, and they marched in military order. As I gained on them, they halted ; and then I perceived that two of the horsemen returned to reconnoitre. On drawing nearer, I could reckon ten mounted troopers, and ten musketeers on foot ; but there was not a female with them.

‘ Stand, monsieur !’ cried one, in French, but with a guttural accent ; ‘ was it you who hallooed ?’

‘ Yes, my friend,’ said I, breathlessly.

‘ For what purpose, fellow ?’

I paused.

‘Answer—I am General Goltz, of the Imperial army.

‘To stop you?’

‘To stop us?’ reiterated another, haughtily; ‘here is an enterprising Gascon for you, gentlemen!’

‘A Scot, as you may find to your cost, sirs,’ said I, menacing them with my drawn sword. ‘Is the Count de Bitche among you?’

‘No,’ replied one, laughing; ‘the Count has more pleasant matters in hand than accompanying us. But what seek you here?’

‘A companion I have lost—a young lady attired in a religious habit—’

This was received by a hoarse shout of guttural German merriment; for most of the personages among whom I had so suddenly fallen were Imperialists belonging to the garrisons of Toul or Nanci.

‘There is a convent of pretty Bernardine nuns at Commercy,’ said General Goltz, turning his horse round; ‘apply there, my friend.

‘Tis a chevalier in the guise of an abbé!’ said one.

‘The devil lurking behind the cross!’ added another.

‘A spy of Louis XIII.—a mouchard! a mouchard!’ cried the Lorraine musketeers, surrounding me. ‘Hola, M. le General—M. le Provost Marechal—a rope, a rope! To the next tree with him! a rope for the mouchard!’

This epithet for a spy or eavesdropper was peculiarly offensive then in France, being derived from the spies of M. de Mouchy, the Inquisitor-General under Francis II., and it inspired me with new anger.

‘Who commands here?’ I demanded, proudly, thrusting back the most forward with the hilt and edge of my sword.

‘I command—I, Wolfgang Count Pappenheim,’ replied a lofty and stern-looking cavalier, who was sheathed in burnished steel from neck to knees, and who wore a broad hat

with a tall feather, and had long moustaches pointed straight out in a line with his ears.

‘ Hear me, Count,’ said I, glad in this desperate extremity to avail myself of a little subterfuge; ‘ you dare not kill one who wears this dress.’

‘ Bah,’ said he, roughly; ‘ I have an indulgence from the Pope to kill whom I please; but surrender, or by the death of the devil, my fellows will make black puddings of thee!’

‘ My reputation, Count, is so well established both at Versailles and in the camp of Duke Charles IV., that I need not suffer myself to be needlessly hacked to pieces, rather than be taken; and so, monsieur, I am your prisoner.’

‘ Your name, abbé, if an abbé you are, indeed?’

‘ I am Arthur Blane, a gentleman of king Louis’s Scottish Guard, and no abbé.’

‘ A cuirassier.’

‘ Yes, monsieur.’

‘ ’Tis he, Count, of whom poor Raoul d’Ische and the Prince de Vaudemont have spoken so often,’ said General Goltz; ‘ parbleu! he is a brave fellow!’

‘ But must, nevertheless, swing, M. le General; he is a spy.’

‘ Count, it is false,’ I exclaimed.

‘ Then what seek you here, so far from your head-quarters, and in this garb too?’

‘ A lady, M. le Comte, a lady who—’

‘ How—have you not ladies enough in the French camp?’

‘ She whom I seek is a lady of Lorraine, whom I had pledged my word of honour to conduct in safety from Paris to the gate of Nanci—being now en route to join the army of Hepburn and Lavalette.’

‘ And who is this demoiselle, and what are her name and rank, that she required a chevalier of the King’s Scottish Guard to escort her from Paris through Champagne and Lorraine?’

Policy and emotions of a somewhat mingled nature made me pause : to mention the name and position of Nicola, as a soubrette of the King's mistress, would only have courted ridicule and mischief.

' Who is she, monsieur ?' demanded the Count. ' I think at such a time as this, when rumour affirms that Mademoiselle de Lorraine has been taken at a sequestered château near Paris, and is now languishing in the Bastille, some wonderful interest must be attached to the woman you are in quest of ?'

' M. le Comte, she is—'

' What—speak !'

' My sister.'

' A likely story ! we never heard that any of our ladies at Nanci had *brothers* in the Garde du Corps Ecossais ; but we shall inquire into all this, at least before we hang you ; so give up your sword.'

' To whom ?' said I.

' To me—it shall suffer no dishonour in my hands.'

' Tis well, Count ; for that sword is the last inheritance of a race that never knew dishonour—until now.'

' Soldiers should never condescend to play the mouchard.'

' Silence, Count, and be generous if you can !' said I, choking with passion. ' If such were said of me after death, I would come back to resent it, though all hell should bar the way.'

Awed by my words, the superstitious German changed colour and turned from me.

' A file of musketeers,' said General Goltz ; ' Sergeant Caspar Alsfeldt, guard the prisoner to Nanci, and shoot him if he attempts to escape.'

' I will inquire into all this to-morrow at the Duke's palace, where you will bring him before me,' said Pappenheim ; ' farewell, M. le Prisonnier—may we part better friends to-morrow than we do to-night Forward, gentlemen, for the hours grow apace.'

Pappenheim, with General Goltz and all the mounted men of his party trotted rapidly off; while I, bareheaded, disarmed, downcast and heartbroken, was marched on foot, guarded by ten muskereers of the regiment de Vaudemont, towards the capital of Lorraine.

To attempt escaping would only have insured to me a sudden and barbarous death; and when marched off I struck my hands wildly together, and could have wept, but for very grief and shame, as I thought of my own helplessness and inability to unravel the mystery that enveloped the future fate of my unfortunate but beloved Nicola.

CHAPTER XLV

NANCI.

My captor, Wolfgang Count Pappenheim, the intended son-in-law of Duke Charles, was the son and heir of the great Pappenheim of the German wars, he who had received no less than fourteen wounds at the battles of Leipzig and Prague, and was surnamed *le Balafré*, as he bore on his person exactly one hundred scars received in the field of honour.

Young Pappenheim had won himself a high reputation for bravery in those wars, especially by his defence of the castle of Wilsburg, a stronghold of the Margravine of Anspach, when it was assailed by the King of Sweden, who was anxious to secure it for the Protestants of the Franconian circle; but when summoned, Wolfgang replied —

‘I will never surrender to a king of Sweden, but shall perish here, and the ruins of Wilsburg will be my monument.’

Gustavus believed him on his father’s reputation, and consequently abandoned the siege. Thus I had ‘the mortifying honour,’ as Sergeant Alsfeldt told me, ‘of having surrendered

my sword to one of the finest soldiers in the army of the German emperor.'

In a state of anxiety that amounted almost to agony. I marched towards Nanci, along a road the darkness of which, as it was buried among coppice, was in unison with the gloom and loneliness that oppressed my heart. The cold white moon waned and went down beyond the level horizon. The country thereabout, though richly wooded, is flat and uninteresting, until the plain is bounded by the Vosges. The scenery grew dark, and the orangeries, vineyards, and coppice that bordered the way seemed black and sombre, as the stars, like diamonds in a dark-blue dome, twinkled in the early morning sky.

The yellow dawn began to gild its eastern quarter above the distant chain of the Vosges; green hill tops brightened in the rising tide of light, and the vanes of village spires and of old châteaux embosomed among oaks that were perhaps coeval with Lothario, king of Lorraine, glittered in the rosy beams. Squirrels and rabbits fled before us across the road from hedge to hedge; the larks began to sing joyously, as the brilliant morning came to gladden the hearts of all, apparently, but me; for I had but one thought—Nicola!

'Where was she, then? Where, how, and with *whom* had she passed the weary hours since our fatal separation?'

I dared not trust myself to think, as footsore, weary, damp with midnight dew, and covered with the dust of the summer roadway, I came in sight of the city of Nanci, which I now regarded with horror as the probable scene of a long and exasperating imprisonment, or (it might be) a cruel and ignominious death; for I was in the hands of soldiers who were without scruple, pity, or remorse—the fierce men of the long and barbarous thirty years' war.

Alsfeldt, the sergeant who had charge of me, proved, however, to be a kind and considerate fellow. Perceiving that I

was without a covering for my head, he attempted to appropriate for my use the hat of the first man we met ; a proceeding which I would by no means sanction. He was fond of extolling the bravery of his colonel, the Prince of Vaudemont, under whom he had served at the defence of Wilsburg, and in some of the more recent battles of the Empire. At a wayside beer-house I entertained him and the musketeers of my escort with cans of beer each ; an act of attention which won me their entire good-will. The sergeant drank to my health and better fortune as he raised the huge wooden tankard to his lips and held it there, with the cheek-plates of his morion and his long, bushy moustaches dipping in the froth, till the contents were drained to the bottom. The soldiers all promised faithfully to prosecute every inquiry in the city and garrison concerning the lady I had lost at the auberge of the Three Willows ; but they frankly told me that I had but a slender chance of seeing her again if she was actually lured away by the abductor of Laura of Lutzelstein.

The bells were being merrily rung as we entered Nanci, and we also heard heavy salvos of artillery thundered from the ramparts.

‘ What does all this mean ? ’ I asked. ‘ Has a victory been won ? ’

‘ No, monsieur,’ replied the sergeant ; ‘ but Duke Charles and the Duke of Alsace pass in state through the streets today to high mass ; and if you would wish to see them proceed from the palace to the church of St. Epurus, instead of marching you direct to where Count Pappenheim ordered me, I shall halt for a time in the great square to oblige you.’

‘ Thanks, sergeant,’ said I ; ‘ but as I neither wish to be stared at nor mocked by the rabble, I would rather proceed to prison at once.’

‘ Nay, monsieur, ’tis to the palace, and not to a prison I am to conduct you.’

Nanci, long celebrated as one of the most pleasant towns in

Lorraine, stands in the midst of a beautiful plain on the left bank of the Meurthe, a river which rolls from the western flank of the Vosges, bearing rafts of timber and faggots on its foaming current to the lower country. Nanci is divided into two quarters: the old town of the eleventh century, and the new one of the fifteenth. The former, which is surrounded by walls, defended by towers, and enclosed by gates and ditches, contains, or contained in 1636, the ducal palace, the great square, which is planted with stately lime-trees, and the ancient parish church of St. Epurus. The streets through which I was conducted to this great square were old and quaint, crooked and narrow.

By a magnificent gate resembling a triumphal arch, but defended by cannon, and moreover decorated by green bays, garlands, and banners, we entered the city. Within were guards of citizens clad in fine velvet doublets, armed with sword, arquebuse, and partizan, wearing the Duke's colours in their scarfs and on their hats; while bodies of Lorraine troops and vassals, mingled with imperial pikemen, lancers, musketeers, and artillery, under the princes of Vaudemont and Lillebonne, filled all the thoroughfares. The Marquis de Marsal, the Counts of Rosiers and Luneville, with other military nobles of the two duchies, all clad in brilliant armour, with plumes in their helmets, gilded truncheons in their hands, and orders of chivalry sparkling on their breasts, rode through the streets, maintaining order among the vast concourse of citizens and peasantry who thronged them, to welcome and behold their gallant native prince—the hero of Prague—proceed from his ducal palace to the city church.

In the principal square and near the palace gate my escort halted and stood close around me. The sergeant placed his arm through mine for the double purpose of protecting me and precluding an escape; and there we stood unobserved among the masses of people who loaded the air of the clear, bright summer morning with clamorous shouts, while cheers,

the tolling of bells, with the perpetual thunder of cannon and bombardes rang on every side.

Exactly at the hour of ten a commotion was visible at the palace; a thrill pervaded the dense multitude; all men present who were *not* soldiers uncovered their heads, and all grew silent for a moment; then there burst forth a hurrah of welcome as the procession issued from the bannered portal of the palace.

Duke Charles had been long absent from his native city, serving under his patron and protector the Emperor; and now, to celebrate his sudden return, all the loyalty of his people had flashed up, as if to gild with a farewell splendour the expiring glory of his house, and power—for the ancient Duchy of Lorraine was doomed ere long to be merged and lost in the growing kingdom of the line of St. Louis. Yet his forefathers had been men of power and valour, who had transmitted to him a noble inheritance, with numerous titles, for he was Duke of Lorraine and Mercoeure; of Calabria, Bar, and Guelderland; Marquis of Pontamoussin, and Nomenay; of Provence, Vaudemont, Zutphen, Blamond, Saar-warden and Salm; Hereditary Provost of Kummelsberg and Governor of Anvir.

CHAPTER XLVI.

SURPRISE AND GRIEF.

FIRST came the principal citizens of Nanci, four abreast, bearing steel partizans and clad in scarlet velvet pourpoints and black serge breeches, slashed with red, guarding the council of state, with the Master of Requests, their secretary, eight advocates and two ushers, all wearing thick ruffs and black gowns furred with white miniver.

Then followed the Great Master of the Household with his twenty-eight officials, including the marshal of the kitchen,

The Great Chamberlain, with the physician, apothecary, &c in black robes, attended by twenty-four valets de chambre in the livery of the Duke.

The Masters of the Horse, the Hounds, the Waggons and the Wardrobe, each with his staff of officials, all of whom were named to me by old Sergeant Alsfeldt. Then came a company of petardiers under the Count de Bitche, whom I longed to grasp by the throat.

The Grand Almoner in full canonicals with the banner of St. Nicolas of Lorraine borne before him; having a covered chalice in his hands, and his eyes cast downward on the earth.

The Grand Marshal, with the Marshals of Lorraine and Bar, all clad in cloth of gold, magnificently mounted, with their batons, banners, and helmets borne before them by esquires or pages.

The priests of the Scottish college at Pontamoussin in their sombre vestments, with the banners of St. Andrew and St. Lucy borne before them. The latter in the hands of old Father Colville.

Then followed the commanders of the ducal troops; of the two companies of gendarmerie; of the garde du corps of Charles IV.; of the regiment of guards, and the Grand Master of the Artillery of Lorraine, all accoutred in brilliant half armour and jack-boots, mounted on fine horses richly caparisoned. All these cavaliers were elderly men, as their moustaches seemed grey or white; and their cuirasses glittered with the orders of the Empire.

Attended by the Prince of Vaudemont and Count Pappenheim, and surrounded by his richly-dressed garde du corps, composed of one hundred chosen Switzers, with their trumpets sounding and kettledrums beating, and followed by all the officials of his civil tribunals, the Advocate General and messieurs the Councillors of the Chamber of Accounts for Nancy and Bar-le-Duc, came Charles IV., Duke of Lorraine, a fine-looking old soldier compact and stately in form, with

his head worn bare less by time than by the peak of his helmet ; he had keen dark eyes and large grizzled moustaches. He was dressed in a suit of black velvet trimmed with narrow lace and silver cord. He wore a high stiff ruff, a diamond hilted sword, and the order of the Golden Fleece. He bowed kindly to the people, who greeted him with a storm of acclamation, as he rode slowly past on a powerful black charger, which he had ridden scatheless through many a battle-field.

The Duke of Alsace, a son of the house of Suabia, who feudally *held* his duchy of the house of Lorraine, rode on his left hand, with his coronet borne before him, by an armed Knight of Malta. This Duke was a child about nine years of age, and though I knew it not then, was destined to bear an important position in this my narrative ; but of that more in time.

A young lady clad in a suit of that rich white satin for the manufacture of which Nanci is so famed, brocaded with gold, rode at his right hand, and managed her horse's reins of red silken fringe, with singular grace. Her hair was of a colour resembling gold, and escaped in brilliant locks from under her broad hat, which had two long and drooping white feathers. Her face was turned from me, as she was conversing with young Pappenheim ; but the enthusiasm of the people grew to a frenzy, in their shouts of welcome : for this golden-haired girl was the Duke's only daughter ; and as they approached, the dense masses in the square swayed to and fro, with such an impetus, that twice I was nearly thrown down and trod under foot.

‘Vive Mademoiselle Marie-Louise !’ was the cry.

‘Vive le Duc d’Alsace !

‘Vive Louise de Lorraine et M. le Comte de Pappenheim !

Such were the shouts that burst like a storm around me.

‘Is that young lady the daughter of the Duke ?’ I asked of the sergeant, who still held me fast by the arm.

‘Yes, monsieur. Pardieu ! but she is lovely ! Her horse

is stopped by the crowd—a moment, and she will look this way.'

'I thought she was in the Bastille, at Paris.'

'So we all thought; but last night, she returned to Nanci. That is the gallant Count Pappenheim (son of Godfrey & *Balafre*), whom she is to marry, that now she is chatting to so gaily. Now, she turns our way—look! Monsieur, look! O vive Mademoiselle de Lorraine!'

The fair young lady heard the stentorian shout of Alsfeldt; she turned to us, and bowed.

'My God! 'tis Nicola!' I ejaculated in a breathless voice—a voice, at least, unheard amid the clamour round us; and so overwhelming were my emotions, on making this discovery, that, had not that good fellow, the sergeant, supported me, I must have fallen at his feet.

Bareheaded, travel-stained, crest-fallen in bearing, and crushed in spirit, I stood a guarded prisoner in the open streets of Nanci, while this brilliant pageant passed before me; and a tide of strange emotions, but chiefly astonishment and grief, with many bitter, bitter thoughts, swept in one wild current through my heart. There was a buzz in my ears; but I heard nothing now, neither the clanging of the church bells, the salvoes from tower and rampart, nor the acclamations of the people; I saw only Nicola; and this fantastic procession in quaint costumes, glittering garbs and armour, that like some fairy pageant or the phantasmagoria of delirium, were bearing her away from me—she whom I loved so well! Yet it was no dream, no delusion, and no mockery of the brain, for I knew that beloved face too well to be mistaken for a moment now.

'Nicola! Nicola!'

I strove to speak, but my voice could only whisper; I strove to stretch my arms towards her, but they sank powerless by my side.

As the Switzers of the ducal garde du corps roughly beat back

the people with the staves of their halberds, and opened a passage again, the procession moved on. As she passed, I thought her eye caught a sight of my upturned face, amid that sea of faces round her ; and, if so, I am assured that the stupefaction and agony it expressed, must have struck a pang in her heart—for she trembled, grew ghastly pale, and nearly fell from her white horse, but Pappenheim caught her hand ; the pageant moved on, and I saw her no more—for that day at least,

Pen cannot describe all that whirled through my heart and brain on that dreadful day, in the streets of Nanci—a day, to me, of sorrow and bewilderment.

A huge cup of wine, brought by the old sergeant, and dashed with brandy, restored me to a certain extent ; and in one hour after this, I found myself, with my escort, in a chamber of the ducal palace, awaiting the behest of Count Pappenheim, who had not yet returned from the church of St. Epurus.

‘ It is all a dream—a nightmare—from which I shall soon awaken ! ’ thought I.

CHAPTER XLVII.

THE PALACE.

THE Duke’s garde du corps of horse, consisting of a hundred Lorraine troopers, who wore white hocquetons over their cuirasses, with a regiment of German imperial infantry, clad in buff coats, with black helmets of hammered iron, occupied the gates, approaches, and lower apartments of the palace in which they had been quartered, so that the people of Nanci might be as little as possible oppressed by their presence.

The princely residence of the Dukes of Lorraine stands in the oldest portion of the city. It has a magnificent entrance, within which was a vestibule, lined by lacqueys, guards, and

pages. From thence, we passed into a noble quadrangle, encircled by a piazza, the columns and arches of which are covered by florid carving, and embellished by many statues and bassi-rilievi. It has also several towers, one of which served for an arsenal and magazine of arms ; the others were staircases. It has gardens of great space and beauty, enclosed on one side by the ramparts of the city. Surrounded by my escort and a crowd of staring lacqueys and pages, I remained in the guard-chamber of the palace, oblivious and heedless alike of their impertinence, and the peculiarity of my position, occupied by one overwhelming thought, until I was roused by a sub-brigadier of the gendarmerie, who rode in, with an order from Monseigneur the Prince of Vaudemont, who had just been accidentally informed of my capture, to conduct me to a proper apartement, where every comfort and attention should be given me ; that my escort were to retire, and that I should consider myself as a prisoner on parole of honour.

I thanked the sub-brigadier, and bade the sergeant, Alsfeldt, adieu, giving him a crown of the sun to drink my health with his comrades. I was then led by a valet-de-chambre up one of the staircases to a portion of the palace that overlooked the gardens, and there three apartments, each of which might have satisfied a marechal of France, were assigned to me. The valet gave me every means of repairing or improving my toilet, which a night spent in the custody of the musketeers, and especially some cuts and slashes received in my late encounter with Vaudemont, had somewhat deranged.

My sitting-room was lofty, and had three casement windows filled with painted glass ; its walls were hung with dark-green velvet, starred with gilded mullets. An oak cabinet, bearing a service of plate and shining crystal, stood at one end, an above it hung a Madonna of Raphael. On the white marbl mantelpiece was carved the celebrated device of the Guises, an A within an o—*chacun A son tour*—meaning that every angle had its turning.

I seated myself by the table at an open window, with my head resting on my hand, seeking to arrange my thoughts, and to recover from the astonishment, the sorrow, and disappointment which oppressed me.

The soft breeze of noon fanned my brow and cheek, which were flushed and hot. It brought to me the perfume of flowers and the fragrance of the orangeries. The gardens were beautiful with a thousand varied flowers; the sunshine was bright and warm; the summer day in Lorraine was ambient and glorious; but my heart was full of bitterness and heavy grief—bitterness for my humiliating position, and grief for the loss of Nicola—for I justly deemed that I had lost her for ever.

The anguish of my disappointment was great; that this artful little beauty should have fooled me, and trifled with a love so honest and so true, so honourable and so pure as mine; for I loved, and in the rash blindness of my boyish love would have married her, when I believed her to be but a nameless and penniless soubrette, and thus, for her sake, would have trampled under foot all the inborn prejudice of race and name, all that family pride and tradition which were ever the second creed of a Scottish gentleman.

I could neither separate nor analyse all the fierce and bitter thoughts that grew up within me, but an overwhelming sense of deception and disappointment were uppermost; for in the brocaded lady, sparkling with jewels, with necklaces of diamonds and strings of pearls, mounted on a pawing steed of spotless white, surrounded by dukes and princes, guards, counts, and cavaliers—in Marie Louise of Lorraine, I could no longer realise Nicola, the gentle, timid, and loving Nicola, of my pleasant journey from Paris to the banks of the Meurthe—she with whom I had passed so strange a night among the rocks in the forest of Champagne.

While deceiving me as to her name and rank, she had doubted my honour and trifled with my love: a bitter conviction and a humiliating one.

Then other memories came, and I could scarcely doubt that I had won an interest in her heart when I rehearsed over and over again our conversations, all of which were graven in my mind, especially that which took place in the forest near St. Michel. When I dwelt on her accents, and the expression of her blue eyes and softly-feminine face, when she spoke to me then, and on similar occasions, could I doubt that she loved me?

Yes, I did doubt now, and in the anguish of that doubt I could have wept.

I recalled the joy she had expressed on learning that Duke Charles (but Duke Charles was her father) and Count Pappenheim were at Nanci; I remembered, too, how merrily she seemed to be conversing with the Count, as their brilliant pageant passed through the public square. These were doubtless 'trifles light as air,' yet they were heavy as cannon-shot to me.

'It is enough!' I exclaimed, with growing anger; 'I have been befooled; this girl never loved me; and if she did, what would her love avail me now?'

At that moment the rattle of kettle-drums, and sound of trumpets and trampling of horses, announced the return of the Duke, whose train rode into the echoing quadrangle. I knew that Nicola was there; but instead of looking from the windows of the corridor, I placed my hands upon my ears, and strove to shut out the sounds of triumph that tortured me.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

CHARLES IV.

M. SCHRECKHORN, an officer of the Swiss guard, was now ushered into my chamber, and with much formality, and more bad French, announced that the Duke required my presence in the hall of the palace, so early as might be convenient for me.

This announcement was, of course, a command to be obeyed. Duke Charles, the father of Nicola—I mean of Marie Louise, for so I must in future name her—was about to question me. How my heart beat as I started from my chair!

‘I am ready,’ said I.

‘But your toilette, monsieur,’ said the Swiss.

‘True, I had forgotten it; excuse me for one moment, M. le Suisse, and then I am at your service.’

I hastily removed all traces of my recent adventures and discomforts, arranged my costume as well as its capabilities permitted, and placed upon my left breast the cross of St. Lazare, which I had hitherto carried in a secret pocket: I was then conducted by the Swiss across the quadrangle and up one of the guarded staircases, to the great hall of the palace; the place where feasts were given, ambassadors received, and high festival held.

This hall was a noble apartment of more than one hundred feet in length. I perceived that it was floridly decorated, and that towards the upper end it was crowded by gentlemen in glittering costumes and armed soldiers, for the halberds of the hundred Swiss guards gleamed as their bearers stood ranked along the wall, fifty on each side. Tattered and dusty banners, taken in ancient battles, hung darkly down from the arched roof; and around the wall, on shields of carved stone, were painted all the heraldic bearings of Duke Charles: the three winglets of Lorraine, covered by a ducal mantle, and surmounted by an eagle; burel *argent*, and *gules* for Hungary; the fleur-de-lis *or*, on a barbel *gules* for Naples; the crosslets of Jerusalem; the four pales *gules* of Arragon; the fleur-de-lis with a border *gules* for Anjou; the golden lion of Guelderland, and the black lion of Juliers, with two barbels of Bar.
.e-Duc.

Under these honours hung the portraits of those dukes of Lorraine who had won them by war or alliance, painted by

Jan de Mahuse, by Titian, Rubens, or Poussin. There was
grim Godfrey of Ardennes in the chain armour in which he
was slain by the Saracens at the battle of Louvain; Gothelo
who stormed Verdun from Conrad the Salique; Baldwin,
King of Jerusalem and Duke of Lorraine; Duke Theobald II.,
who fought so valiantly at Spire; Duke Raoul, who was slain
at Cressy; Duke Claude, armed cap-a-pie, as he appeared at
the passage of the Alps in 1515; his daughter, (the mother of
Mary Stuart,) Marie of Lorraine, whose birth-place, the old
ducal castle of Bar, had—in memory of her—been spared from
sack and fire last winter by the G^ende du Corps Ecossais: Anthony
Duke of Lorrainie and Calabria, who fought the
Lutherans and conquered Alsace, a stern warrior sheathed in
black armour, and bearing on his left wrist a Scottish falcon,
the gift of our monarch James V; in short, the hall was
surrounded by portraits, real or imaginary, of all the thirty-
two dukes of the old Merovingian house of Lorraine, and the
thirty-third in succession awaited me under a canopy or cloth
of estate, seated at a table, which was covered by papers and
letters, the usual paraphernalia of a council-board; and as I
gazed about me and thought of all the past glories of this
ancient line of ducal princes, even the hope that Marie Louise
would pity the passion with which she had so wantonly
inspired me died away in my aching heart.

The Duke was still attired as I had last seen him in the
morning. Pappenheim stood by his chair, eyeing me with
dark scrutiny, for he had a keen, penetrating eye and imperious
expression of face. De Bitche stood a little in the background
in his half armour, as colonel of the petardiers, and under his
open helmet I read an expression of undisguised malice in his
eye. I had a debt to settle with this worthy personage; but
the trick he had played me, and the destruction of my fine
horse, were, at that moment, less near my heart than a sense
of bitterness at the discovery I had made, and of the humiliations
of standing before Charles of Lorraine in the character of a spy,

I looked anxiously round for Vaudemont, but he was not in the hall, neither was his sister, though many ladies of rank were present; and as I approached, with an air of as much firmness and honest dignity as I could assume, the courtiers of the military Duke, the councillors of state, master of requests, keeper of the seals, and others drew near, while the officer of Swiss presented, saying, in a low voice,—

‘ Monseigneur le Duc, this is the gentleman our prisoner—M. l’Abbé.’

‘ I am no abbé, M. le Suisse,’ said I, bluntly; ‘ I am Arthur Blane, a Scottish gentleman in the service of king Louis.’

‘ And none in his garde du corps is more gallant or more true,’ said the old Duke, drawing off his long leather glove, and presenting his hand to me; not to kiss, after the absurd fashion of princes, but to press, like a brave, honest man; for this venerable soldier, though usually calm and grave, and lofty without pride, could act very impulsively at times.

‘ By this honour, Monseigneur,’ said I, in a voice that grew tremulous with conflicting emotions, ‘ I presume that I am not to be treated as a prisoner of war.’

‘ Prisoner?—no, no my brave stranger—my daughter has told me all.’

‘ All?’ I reiterated in my heart; ‘ what can he mean by *all*?’

‘ I have much to thank you for, M. Blane; but I am an old soldier, and have few words to spare; yet I can well appreciate deeds of honour, faith, and loyalty. I would speak with you of my daughter, Mademoiselle Marie-Louise, whom you have hitherto known under the very homely name of Nicola.’

‘ Of Nicola—oh yes, Nicola!’ I faltered involuntarily, for that dear name, rendered by association so delightful to my ear, made me start, as it stirred my inner heart. A large mirror hung near me; I surveyed my own face in it, and the immobility of its features surprised even myself. This expres

sion was fortunate, as I was the centre of many curious eyes, that stared at me without the slightest ceremony.

‘ You hear me?’ said the Duke, gently.

‘ Monseigneur, I am all dutiful attention.’

‘ Mademoiselle Louise was discovered last night at a country hostelry, between this and Commercy.’

‘ Discovered—’

‘ By the Count de Bitche, colonel of our petardiers, who had gone there on a mission of kindness, believing her to be a lady, whose protector had been killed by some of our people in a brawl; but imagine his astonishment, on finding there the Princess of Lorraine, attired like a little sister of Vincent de Paule !’

I gave the Count a furtive glance of hatred and defiance, to which he replied by a smile of scornful pride.

‘ M. Blane,’ continued the Duke, ‘ you have been the means of saving, from the degradation of the Bastille, a princess of a house which, though menaced now by ruin and destruction, is fully equal to, and more ancient than, many of the royal lines in Europe—a house which, through Marie of Guelders and Marie of Lorraine, has been twice allied to the sovereign princes of your own country. I repeat to you, that my daughter has told me all—(*all again!*)—and I must seek the means to repay you—not for the observance of your word of honour, pledged to Clara d’Amboise, faithfully to conduct Mademoiselle here—but for the unmerited humiliation to which that duty has been the means of subjecting you.’

‘ I thank you, Monseigneur le Duc. An exile from my own country, I have but the inheritance of a Scottish gentleman—a poor soldier of fortune—’

‘ And this, Monsieur—’

‘ Is my father’s sword—with glory and adversity.

‘ That sword shall be restored to you. M. de Bitche, restore his rapier to M. Blane,’ said the Duke, again pressing my hand; ‘ Mousieur, I see by the order which you wear,

that you are a man of merit as well as of courage. What say you to enter the service of my daughter's intended husband?"

"Ah—she has not told him *all*!" thought I, bitterly; "or Charles IV would not speak thus to me."

"His regiment of horse lacks a Major—but you frown; you Scots are all devoted to the service of France. Well, well; I seek not to tempt you from your allegiance; but for the good deed you have done him, Charles of Lorraine will ever esteem you as one of his dearest friends."

"Oh Monseigneur, you overwhelm me by this condescension."

"And now, M. Blane, you are welcome to reside at our palace of Nanci so long as you please."

"Your hospitality, Monseigneur, would endanger my honour as a loyal soldier," said I, impatient to leave for ever the home and vicinity of one who had cost my heart so dear.

"Well—well; the main-body of your army is far from here, beyond the Rhine, under the Marechal de la Force. How stand you for funds?"

"I am at zero, Monseigneur," said I; "for I had spent so much in procuring luxuries for my fair companion, that I had scarcely a denier left."

The Duke wrote for me an order on his Comptroller-General of Finance for a thousand crowns; but when presented, only fifty were forthcoming; for war and impending conquest had sorely impaired the resources of his once princely inheritance.

He presented me with a beautiful pair of silver-mounted girdle pistols; and now many gentlemen and cavaliers of his court, who had hitherto held coldly aloof, pressed around me, with those compliments and congratulations that flow so readily from a courtier's oily tongue; but I observed that still the suspicious or haughty Pappenheim, and the sullen De Bitche, were resolved to shun me. After some frivolous conversation I retired, and was conducted, by M. Schreckhorn, the Swiss, to my own apartments, where again I seated myself at the table as before, to ponder over all that had passed.

CHAPTER XLIX

DEFIANCE.

THE cheers of the people still rang in the streets, where several puncheons of wine were set abroach by the master of the household; the contents of these were quaffed by the German troops, who thereafter, with great liberality, gave the loyal citizens the purple staves to suck.

In my chamber I found my valise, which in the hurry and excitement of recent events I had quite forgotten, although it contained the king's despatches to the Duc de Lavalette, and Sir John Hepburn's baton and diploma as Marechal of France. The documents I resolved to secure about my person for the future, until I could place them in the hands of those to whom they were addressed.

'How came this portmanteau here?' I asked my servant.

'An equerry of the Prince of Vaudemont found it, at an auberge near the Meurthe—the auberge of the Three Willows; and M. le Prince at once sent it here, believing it to belong to monsieur.'

'The Prince was right—I owe him many thanks.'

'He left word that he would be proud to see monsieur at his apartments, on his leaving the presence of the Duke.'

'At his apartments—is he there now?'

'Yes, monsieur—awaiting you.'

'Please to conduct me to him.'

The servant bowed to the rosettes at his knees, and preceded me along several passages all panelled with oak, and decorated in many places by stags' heads and horns, and by trophies of ancient arms and heraldic devices, amid which the winglets of Lorraine, mantled, collared and coroneted, were ever the most prominent ornament. We reached a door, before which a page was lounging on a fauteuil, and within

we heard voices laughing and in animated conversation, sounds that jarred upon my ear, for my heart was sick and humbled.

I was ushered into a large apartment, the walls of which were hung with rich old tapestry, representing the loves of heathen gods, and scantily-attired goddesses ; and of shepherds and shepherdesses, with crook and flageolet ; but who were much more occupied with each other than with their sheep, which seemed to browse among clover composed of cabbages and sunflowers. Several suits of old armour, numerous stars of burnished weapons, and two lofty black oak cabinets, profusely carved, decorated this room, in the centre of which stood a table, whereon a luxurious luncheon was spread ; and here De Vaudemont, Count Pappenheim and De Bitche, were engaged in doing every justice to the good things before them. A fourth place was vacant, as the page intimated, for me.

‘ Welcome, M. Blane,’ exclaimed the Prince, taking me warmly by the hand, ‘ welcome, to our ancient home at Nancy !’

‘ I thank you, M. le Prince.’

‘ Ah, my friend, on that night, when we first crossed our swords in the Place de la Grève at Paris, who could foresee to-day, or the gratitude we owe you ?’ How strangely things come to pass in this changing world ! And on that night at Paris, you fought in defence of Marie Louise too, when she fled from Raoul d’Ische and me, for we believed her to be but a little grisette, tripping before us in the dark. You remember poor Raoul, and his favourite song,

‘ Vive le fils d’Harlette !
Normands,
Vive le fils d’Harlette ! ’

Poor Raoul ; he was indeed a gallant spirit ! These are my friends, M. Blane ; this is M. le Comte Pappenheim—’

‘ The brave son of a brave father,’ said I, bowing ; but

Pappenheim smiled disdainfully, and played with the shaggy moustache which covered his upper lip—a lip thick and coarse, like that which since the days of the Emperor Maximilian I. has been deemed fashionable, and even royal, in Austria.

‘And this is the colonel of my father’s petardiers, M. le Comte de Bitche, whom you have had the pleasure of meeting before—’

‘And whom I have sworn to run through the heart!’ I exclaimed, laying my hand on my sword, and glad to find a legitimate object on which to pour out all my long pent-up wrath and bitterness.

The Count sprang up, and was about to speak with all the fury becoming his character and the occasion; when the Prince exclaimed,

‘Silence, gentlemen! The hand that dares to draw a sword in the palace of Lorraine, is forfeited to the public executioner. So be wary, I command you—be wise, and become friends.’

‘Never, while I have breath!’ said I.

The Count smiled with a provoking expression of contempt, and gnawed his wiry cavalier moustache. Then he reseated himself, and after exchanging sinister glances with Pappenheim, continued restlessly to pluck and stroke his thick black lansquenet beard.

‘M. le Prince,’ said Pappenheim, rising proudly and coldly, ‘desire your servants to leave the room; I have to make a communication which they, at least, must not hear.’

‘Retire, messieurs,’ said the Prince, to his valet, and to two pages, who withdrew, with faces expressive of disappointment.

‘Comte de Bitche, draw the arras across the doors—so, thank you. I presume there are here no panels or partitions to which the ear can be applied?’

‘None; but why all this provoking precaution?’ asked the Prince, with considerable hauteur, for rumours of Pappenheim’s approaching marriage with Marie Louise had caused

the proud Imperialist to receive an adulation, respect, and flattery from the officers and courtiers of the ducal household, somewhat galling to the young heir of Lorraine, who viewed it with mingled jealousy and mistrust; ‘*M. le Comte, wha the devil do you mean?*’

‘A jealous regard, Monseigneur le Prince, for the honour of your father’s house, and of your sister, Mademoiselle of Lorraine.’

‘*Milles barbes!* what do you say, Count Pappenheim?’ asked Vaudemont, changing colour, while De Bitche gave me a covert and ferocious smile.

‘I mean simply *this*,’ replied Pappenheim (who was the Prince’s senior by nearly ten years, and a taller man by at least half a head), as he came close to him, and spoke in a hoarse German accent, with his eyes sparkling, and a face flushed by anger; ‘I mean, Prince of Vaudemont, that to spare this Scotsman’s life is in you an act alike unwary and unwise.’

‘Parbleu! you are mad.’

‘I am *not* mad; but I know that death *alone* can make a secret sure.’

‘A secret?’ reiterated the Prince, with an air of perplexity.

‘What secret, Count of Pappenheim?’ I demanded, keeping my hand still on my sword.

‘I am addressing the Prince of Vaudemont,’ replied the Count, with exasperating hauteur, ‘not *you*, monsieur.’

‘To the point!’ said the Prince, stamping his foot.

‘I mean that your sister, Mademoiselle Marie Louise of Lorraine, the intended bride of Wolfgang Count of Pappenheim, was most unworthily, most unwisely, and most indeately, committed by the French king’s mistress to this Scotsman’s care, to travel with him together for many nights and days, these two hundred miles or so, through Champagne and Lorraine. You understand me now, monseigneur, I presume.’

'Peace, Count; you alone are unwise and ungenerous, to noise it thus abroad, and while in anger, too. The Scot has performed his trust honourably and faithfully, and for one feature in the affair only do I feel shame. That Marie Louise, when suddenly leaving the court of France on our quarrel with Louis, had to take refuge with the Lorrainer d'Amboise: but that woman, though the mistress of the King, is the daughter of an old and faithful adherent of our house, who fell by my father's side at Prague; and more honourable would it have been in Clara d'Ische, and in Mademoiselle my sister, to have trusted their secret to the honour of M. Blane, and made him fully aware that the disguised girl he was conducting to Nanci was the only daughter of Duke Charles IV., and not the soubrette of a licentious Parisienne, of mature age.'

'Do not add that as an additional invective, my dear Prince,' said De Bitche; 'king's mistresses are always dames of mature age—it is an historical fact.'

'They ought fully and amply to have trusted to him,' resumed the Prince, without heeding the Count.

'I would to heaven they had done so!' said I, in a half-stifled voice; 'for then much mental misery had been spared me—I had never raised my eyes or hopes so high.'

'Arthur Blane,' said the Prince, who alone had heard something of this soliloquy, 'thou art a fine fellow, and a brave one, and I love thee better every day—ay, too well to suffer Pappenheim to do thee wrong.'

'I thank you, M. le Prince.'

'And I thank you, too,' added Pappenheim, with a courtier's sneering smile; 'I thank you for the jealous care you have of your sister's honour, believing, however, it would be all the greater were you both, as you are not, the children of one mother.'

'Coarse Austrian!' began the Prince, passionately, but suddenly moderating his tone, he said, 'M. le Comte, your

sneer is alike insolent and unjust, and I repel it with the scorn 't merits. Mademoiselle is the daughter of a former marriage, true, and my senior by a year or more, yet do I love her as my own life, more even than my father does, for al. his hopes and pride are centred upon me, as his only heir. Beware, Count, how you approach this delicate subject again. for though pliant as a willow to Marie Louise, you may find me tough as the mountain oak to her intended husband.'

'Enough, monseigneur,' replied the Count, assuming his plumed hat, and retiring with repeated bows towards the door : 'I shall not renew this subject again, but at the same time crave leave to choose my own friends, and beg to be excused sitting at table with your new Scottish ally, with whom I here proclaim I shall neither make peace nor truce.'

'Neither will I,' added De Bitche, retiring also, and from the door, hurling his leather glove at me.

'Take back your glove, De Bitche,' said the Prince, snatching it from my hand, and tossing it along the corridor ; 'and on peril of your life, fight in this matter without my knowledge.'

He closed the door after his guests, and turning towards me, said, with a ruffled air,

'My poor M. Blane; these two irritable Counts mean you mischief. I saw it in their eyes, and De Bitche has the yellow orbs of a snake. Milles barbes ! I wish that you were beyond our lines, among your own people, safely out of Lorraine, and in the French camp ; for these two will leave no means untried to compass your destruction !'

With this comfortable assurance, I seated myself at table , and we filled our cups with wine.

CHAPTER L.

RATHER POLITICAL.

I now rehearsed, as succinctly as I could, considering the agitation of my thoughts, my adventures with Marie Louise on our journey ; omitting only such passages as I deemed might prove unnecessary, or unwelcome. When I concluded, her brother expressed much satisfaction, and gave me earnest thanks, adding that in everything, my relation agreed with that given by Mademoiselle to himself, and to the Duke.

‘A further proof that she has not told them *all*,’ thought I, again.

Now that I have heard your story, and that those blustering Counts are gone elsewhere to swear and grumble over pots of Rhenish, or jugs of German beer,’ said the gay Prince, filling up my wine-horn again, ‘tell me, how are all my enemies, the good people of Paris ? Marion de l’Orme, Ninon de l’Enclos, Louis *le Juste* (faugh !), and Anne of Austria ; and how is Father Richelieu himself—the great master showman in red hat and stockings, who makes all these little marionettes to hop and dance whenever he pulls the political strings ?’

‘Marion is still surrounded by lovers, and Ninon ditto, having quite forgotten the Count de Poligny,’ I replied, in the same bantering tone ; ‘Louis is still in the silken meshes of Clara d’Ische ; Anne of Austria still makes confessions to Monseigneur, the Archbishop of Paris, and still powders, paints, and patches ; and eats and drinks as usual with the regal voracity of a pike ; while Richelieu, the Coadjutor’s rival in her heart, still enrolls regiments, and levies treasures, to carry the frontiers of France towards the Rhine.’

The expression of Vaudemont’s face changed, and his eyes sparkled at these words.

‘ Louis, most falsely surnamed the Just, is a prince without honour, and without gratitude !’ said he, flinging his empty silver cup upon the table ; ‘ he is at once the slave and the tool of Cardinal Richelieu, whom he hates and fears, and yet obeys—Richelieu, the most stern and bloody minister that ever stained the annals of France!—and now to divert the attention of her people from the intrigues by which he is surrounded, and by which he, a presumptuous priest, has obtained all but the royal authority, he has plunged Louis into this wanton war with the Empire and Lorraine, on the bold plea, ever so pleasing to French vanity, that their frontier shall be the Rhine. Marched by Champagne, and bordered by the Rhine, with Burgundy on one hand, and Luxembourg on the other, doubtless my father’s ancient dukedom presents a tempting morsel to our friend M. le Cardinal and his creatures—and to enable them to swallow this morsel with ease, he has poured five armies into Germany and Italy. But our people are brave, bold, and hardy ; our valleys are covered by vineyards ; our mountains teem with mines of the richest ore, and hence this old Lorraine of ours—this patrimony which we have inherited since the days of the Merovingian kings—forms a prize too valuable to be relinquished to the grasping house of Bourbon : and while we have a rial and a rapier left, with God’s help and the Emperor’s, we shall defend it !’

‘ Louis asserts that Lorraine belongs to him, because Charles the Simple united it to France in the tenth century, and made Regnier governor over it.’

‘ Pardieu—no ! ’tis our devil of a Cardinal who asserts this. But France will not be content with her boundaries at the Rhine, and if so, where is this spirit to end ? Since the days of Charles the Great, the French dominions have not had such prospects of extension as they have now by the schemes of Richelieu, who has cast his eyes on Lorraine, Alsace, Brissac, and Philipsburg. He has cast them over Flanders,

towards Dunkirk ; across the Pyrenees, and over Rousillon into Catalonia. The annexation of our duchy to France would bring her frontier forty leagues into the empire ; it would make Louis XIII. master of all the land between the Saar and the Moselle ; it would secure his possession of Burgundy, and open up his path to the Palatinate : but never while blood and breath remain to Duke Charles and his son will they submit to France, and place the coronet of their independent dukedom under the closed-crown of the imperious line of St. Louis ! And now, M. Blane, for your own affairs. You must be aware, my friend, that the sooner you leave Nanci, the better for your honour and for your life. In the first place rumour may indulge in unpleasant surmises about your sojourn here ; and in the second, I would have you to rejoin your comrades without delay, lest Pappenheim, this *Aeneas* of ours who seeks a wife, and his fidus Achates, the Petardier, who seeks that, which is much the same, mischief —may work you evil ; for they are at no pains to conceal their hostility.'

' Prince, you speak my very thoughts ; I am, indeed, most anxious to be gone,' said I, though the prospect of leaving Nanci without a parting word from Marie Louise was agony to me ; yet, fooled and deceived as I had been, what would a parting word avail me now ? ' I will this night depart for the French camp ; but I know not where my comrades are, or how far I have to travel.'

' Morbleu ! you do not know where they are ?'

' No.'

' How—'

' You forget, M. le Prince, that I have passed a winter in the seclusion of the Bastille, where I heard nothing of Paris but the hum of its streets, far down below my chamber window.'

' The French are still before Elsace Zaberne.'

' I think Madame d'Amboise mentioned that siege to me.'

‘Very probably.’

‘Colonel Mulheim defends it?’

‘Ma foi! yes: a valiant Lorrainer, a handsome and gallant seigneur, who will give them some trouble, for he is as proud and as obstinate as a Scot or a Spartan. He will give them a heavy butcher’s bill of killed and wounded to send king Louis.’

‘Them—whom?’

‘Messieurs Hepburn, Lavalette, and Saxe-Weimar.’

‘Is he in the field, too?’

‘You must understand that old Father Richelieu has just concluded a notable treaty with the Duke of Weimar, who has bound himself to maintain eighteen thousand Germans for the service of France, in return for which the Cardinal, with the greatest liberality, has made him a free and perpetual gift of *our* province of Alsace, which was ceded to us by the treaty of Verdun, and which, though taken from us by the Empire and given to the Bishop of Strasbourg and its boy-duke, we still deem ours. The inhabitants of Zaberne, our principal city and fortress there, have naturally conceived some objections to this transference of our rights: thus they are all in arms, and the walls are obstinately defended by Colonel Mulheim against some thirty thousand French, Scots, and Germans; but unless Count Gallas, who is on the march to relieve it and to form a junction with our troops now here in Nanci, crosses the Rhine within a week, I fear it must fall; for our couriers say that Count John of Hanau has been slain; that the walls were breached on the 9th of June, and that Hepburn’s Scots were clamouring to be led to the assault. This is now the 14th of June, and by this time perhaps they have planted the standard of the Louises above the grave of the gallant Mulheim; for our noble Lorrainer vowed that Zaberne should be his tomb before it yielded to a foe.’

‘By what route should I proceed there?’

‘Any route that will secure you from the snares and ~~holes~~.

tility of Pappenheim, in whose eye, when he left us, I read so deadly an expression.'

'Prince,' said I, passionately, as anger and jealousy fired me, 'I will fight him hand to hand, on foot or horseback, with sword and pistol, in the public market-place of Nanci, if you urge this on me more.'

'Fight *him*—my sister's affianced husband, the love of your friend, the little Nicola of your romantic journey? Peste! Comrade, you must not think of that, but rather study how to avoid him. Two roads lead from this to Zaberne,' he added, taking down from the wall one of those maps of Lorraine and the Rhine engraved by Ferrari, the then celebrated author of an epitome of geography. 'I would have you to leave Nanci to-night, quietly and alone, after dusk, and I will see that you are well armed and fleetly mounted.'

'And the distance to Zaberne is—'

'About twenty French leagues.'

'Thanks, M. le Prince.'

'You have still four hours left to dine with me and prepare for your journey; but do me the favour to remain in your own apartments till I come for you, as Nanci is full of men, who, like De Bitche, are infuriated against the soldiers of Louis XIII. I go to parade my regiment in the great square, but in two hours will return—till then, adieu!'

'Adieu, M. le Prince, with a thousand thanks for all your kindness.'

We bowed and separated.

CHAPTER LI.

A LAST INTERVIEW.

VAUDEMONT's page was conducting me to my rooms, when one of the Duke's gentlemen in waiting, M. René, who wore the cross of Malta on his dark velvet cloak, met me in the corridor, with a message to the effect that Mademoiselle de Lorraine, having heard that I was soon to leave Nancy, desired that I would favour her with an interview of a few minutes in the Duke's apartments. Fortunately the corridor was dimly lighted; otherwise he of the cloak and Maltese cross would have remarked how I changed colour at this announcement. For a moment, a fierce suspicion flashed upon me, that this request in the name of Marie Louise was but a deadly lure of Pappenheim and De Bitche; I had heard of such snares often, in that time, and in those lands of public and private assassination. I was without pistols, but to hesitate was impossible, and with a bow of assent, I said—

You mentioned the apartments of Monseigneur?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"Is the Duke there?"

"No; he has accompanied M. de Vaudemont to parade a body of soldiers outside the palace."

"I am ready, monsieur—lead on," said I, in a voice broken by the mingled nature of my emotions and all that had passed; and while feeling my heart sink at the prospect of an interview with Marie Louise alone, it appeared to me that the voice and manner of my conductor were characterised by a strange sadness and sorrow.

I stood before her, in one of the loftily-ceiled and magnificent apartments of that princely dwelling, her father's ducal palace; and the flush of the summer noon-day's sun

streamed through a painted casement full upon the outline of her faultless head and form, edging with a dazzling brightness the golden tresses of her hair, the curve of her delicate neck and shoulders, and the folds of her white brocade, that fell so gracefully around her. All conscious that we breathed the same atmosphere again, and that I was near her, I approached with averted eye, until I might have touched her, and then our glances met—but oh how timidly and sorrowfully! Yet I gazed full upon her, for her soft blue eyes were the bright stars in which, with all the fond astrology of love, I strove to read my future destiny.

But though their gentleness remained, her bearing was changed. It was no longer the timid diffidence, which was characteristic of the winning Nicola, that I read in them now; but the clear and full yet chaste expression of a woman of undoubted rank, and of one who had been long accustomed to her high position; and pausing, I bowed low, with a humility that was half mockery, while with a sigh of bitterness and sorrow, I remembered that I stood before my lost love, the daughter of Duke Charles IV.—Mademoiselle Marie Louise, of Lorraine and Bar-le-Duc, she whom I believed to have made my honest passion the plaything of an hour.

‘M. Blane,’ said she, in a voice that seemed piercing, for it stirred my very soul, though it seemed to be rendered tremulous by her emotions: ‘why do you not come nearer, and give me your hand?’

‘My hand—mademoiselle?’

‘Your hand—as of old.’

‘Because we are no longer what we—were.’

‘My dear M. Arthur,’ said she, trembling excessively as she clasped my hand within her own; ‘what is the meaning of all this? does not the time seem long—very long—since we have spoken?’

‘Yet we parted last night, mademoiselle,’ said I, with affected carelessness. She looked at me earnestly and said—

‘ Do not speak so unkindly to me, Arthur ; but confess that the time *has* seemed long to you.’

‘ An eternity !’ I exclaimed, as her heart throbbed beneath my hand, which she pressed against her side ; ‘ but *alias*, mademoiselle—’

‘ Call me Nicola.’

‘ Nay—nay—never again.’

‘ We were so happy during those long rides through sunny Champagne, when you knew me only as poor Nicola—were we not ?’

‘ And as poor Nicola I loved you—loved you with a passion the strength and purity of which are known only to God and to myself ! Happy ? Oh yes ! we were very, very happy, mademoiselle—happier than I shall ever be again.’

‘ Do not say so, I implore you ?’ she exclaimed in a low voice ; while her fine blue eyes filled with tears, and expressed so much love and melancholy that my soul was moved for her.

‘ Pity me, M. Blane,’ said she ; ‘ I was then, and am still, but the victim of circumstances. The time which I foresaw—the time when we would become estranged—has come to pass and *now* you can understand my sorrowful reluctance to hear you speak of love—to receive your offers of—marriage.’

‘ But why did you conceal from me your exalted rank ? why did you not trust me with your name, your title, your secret mission ? I had then guarded my heart by prudence and honour too ; I would have steeled my breast against you—.

‘ Had such been possible,’ said she, smiling through ~~her~~ tears, and still clasping my hand.

‘ Oh, why did you trifle with a love so true as mine, by a deception so unworthy of us both ?’

‘ The Countess d’Amboise, that creature of Louis, who has the key to his heart and secrets, to whom I intrusted myself at Paris, (a faithful adherent of ours, if she has no other virtue.) advised me to maintain the character in which I first

appeared to you on that night in the Place de la Grève; and dearly has that duplicity cost me.'

She wept, and still we stood hand in hand.

' But whence the name of Nicola?' said I.

' My name is Nicola Marie Louise; and I chose the first, because it was the name of my dear mother, who lies in the church of St. Eporus; and, moreover, because our patron is St. Nicolas of Lorraine.'

' But this strange sojourn in Paris, mademoiselle?'

' I was there when Richelieu suddenly took measures to grasp the dukedom of Lorraine; and one of his first intentions was to place me in the Bastille. Of this Madame d'Amboise gave me timely notice; I sought shelter with her, but remained in Paris watching the tide of events. Lorraine is my country; it is the patrimony of my fathers; it is the land of Joan of Arc, and why should not I, in some wise, seek to serve the soil she sprang from?'

' And to this end, you will wed Count Pappenheim, and duly bestow your bridal garments on the shrine of St. Lucy—'tis all wise, proper, and befitting, mademoiselle.'

' How cruel in you to speak thus to me!' said she, upbraidingly; ' to marry Pappenheim, while—while—loving you—would be to bear about in my heart a load of misery too terrible for contemplation.'

I bent my hot face upon her hand in joy, and kissed it.

' I was decoyed from our solitary little auberge at the Three Willows, by a specious falsehood of the Count de Bitche, who, in my costume as a sister of Vincent de Paule, did not at first recognise me.'

' And he told you—'

' That you were slain, or desperately wounded. Oh, Heaven, how was it that I did not die on hearing his terrible words, for they ring yet in my ears! Bitter was the suffering they cost me! I rushed from the auberge, and desired him to lead me to you; but, with one of his malevolent smiles, he told

me, that he had decoyed me for himself—that it was all a pretty little snare, that he loved me, and so forth. I then threw off my hood, declared my name and rank, commanding him on his manhood and allegiance to lead me to my brother. Our worthy petardier knew me then! Oh, had you seen how quickly the brutal tyrant changed to the cringing slave! He obeyed me; but never can I tell you all I endured until De Vaudemont gave me tidings of your safety; nor can I describe the emotions that stirred my heart, Arthur, when I saw you—you whom I loved so tenderly—'

‘Ah, mademoiselle—’

‘When I saw you standing in that crowded street, looking so wildly and bewildered, crest-fallen, bareheaded, and a prisoner—pale, weary, and on foot—dearest Arthur!’

‘You *did* see me then?’

‘But girt round, hemmed in by iron etiquette, the centre of a thousand eyes, I *dared* not even accord a kind glance towards you. In courts we learn sorely to school our hearts, Arthur.’

‘And to trample on the hearts of others, too.’

‘You wrong me—do not say so.’

The assurance that she still loved me made me once more calm; and such is the caprice of the human heart, that, at times, strange emotions of artificial coldness flitted through my breast.

‘Arthur,’ said she; ‘how changed and how diffident these twenty-four hours have made you?’

‘Mademoiselle,’ I replied, seeing the madness of again yielding to my emotions; ‘I *am* diffident; because I am not like that brave Pappenheim, and because my love is sincere, though it merits no return—from you, at least.’

‘What cruel enigma is this?’

‘Mademoiselle de Lorraine, you are no longer Nicola, the poor, fugitive soubrette; and in a mere worldly point of view, you are far, far above me; though I am a gentleman, whose fathers for six hundred years have borne their crest in battle

on their helmets; yet what have I, an exile, a soldier of fortune, to offer worthy even a smile from the daughter of Charles IV., the victor of Prague, and the hero of Pologn?

‘ My poor Arthur! you have that which is better than all the crowns of Europe—a faithful and true heart; I find that I must speak for you as well as for myself. Marie Louise cannot lose that heart, which she won as Nicola. Love has a language that cannot be expressed by words alone; thus your tenderness and diffidence, even with the poor soubrette, were the surest indication of the depth of yours.’

‘ Oh, yes!’ said I, clasping my hands; ‘ my love is equalled only by your beauty and your merit.’

‘ Now,’ she exclaimed, almost playfully, ‘ you must not be imitating Ronsard.’

‘ I am in agony, and you speak to me in jest.’

‘ And so you would not give one golden hair of Nicola’s head for Louise of Lorraine, with all her rank and beauty? Oh, poor M. Blane, what say you now?’

‘ Jesting yet! I say that I think so still, and yet—my heart, God help me, feels broken.’

‘ Come—come—allons!’ said she, waving her pretty white hand; ‘ be a man, Arthur; what say you to join my father, and fight under the standard of the Emperor?’

‘ By the side of Pappenheim and De Bitche?’

‘ No.’

‘ What then?’

‘ By the side of Vaudemont and Duke Charles. In France, your Scottish Hamiltons are Dukes of Chatelherault in Poitou; your Forbeses are Lords of La Faye; your Douglasses are Dukes of Touraine and Lords of Longoville; your Stuarts are Lords of Aubigné, Governors of Avignon, and Dukes of Calabria. Why may not *you* become a count or prince in our duchy of Lorraine?’

‘ Impossible!’

‘ Why impossible?’

‘ Because the days of Lorraine as a duchy are doomed, and because I am a soldier of France. Temp^s me not, for my honour—’

‘ Will be dear to me as my own; so I pray you to excuse me,’ said she, while her tears fell fast.

‘ To-night, Louise, I go, never to return; but my soul I give to God—my sword to France—my heart to *you*.’

‘ You are going—’ she faltered.

‘ Yes.’

‘ Whither?’

‘ To the French camp, before Elsace-Zaberne.’

‘ Alas !’

‘ Your rank forbids me even to hope,’ said I.

‘ Then love will soon die.’

‘ Nay, nay ! give me leave to seek a field where I may fall, if I cannot forget you. I leave this to-night, and take the road by Sarrebourg and Phalsbourg towards Alsace. Oh, Marie Louise ! in memory of the love I have vowed and you have accepted, think of me sometimes ; and in memory of the pleasant days we have passed—of all I hoped, and all that never can be—give me one kind kiss before I leave you for ever !’

We opened our arms, and were about to meet, when simultaneously we caught sight of a tall man, wearing a mantle and star, a long feather and sword, who stood between the parted arras of the doorway, observing us with sinister eyes, while quietly smoothing his large collar of fine Flemish lace, and lounging against the door-post.

‘ Count Pappenheim !’ I exclaimed, instinctively placing my hand into my sword-hilt.

‘ At your service, Monsieur l’Abbé, or Monsieur Scaramouche, by the devil’s death ! which you please.’

How long had he been there ? How much or how little he had heard of our interview, of her abhorrence for him and her love for me, of my route and purpose, I knew not

Quick as lightning, I asked these questions of myself, and sternly made a step towards him. He gave us a malicious smile, and with a bow of profound irony, said—

‘ Mademoiselle de Lorraine and M. Blane, allow me kindly to end an interview, which, under all the circumstances, seems to have been sufficiently painful and prolonged. The Duke, your father, mademoiselle, sent me, as his most fitting messenger, to say that he would speak a few words with you, on a matter of the first importance to us both ; thus I doubt not that our very good friend of the Garde du Corps Ecossais will excuse us.’

This style of deportment, in which hatred, jealousy, and rage were skilfully veiled under a bland but ironical exterior, left me nothing more to urge at that time ; and we bowed mutually, as with a heart swollen by fury, sorrow, and envy, I saw him take the cold white hand of the girl I loved—of Marie Louise—and lead her away. I was left alone, with nothing of her but the memory of her parting glance, which was so full of agony and expression, that I seem to see it still before me, even now, after the long lapse of many, many years.

CHAPTER LII.

THE CHAPEL IN THE WOOD.

So ended my painful interview with Marie Louise.

The lofty air assumed by this presumptuous Austrian lord rankled in my breast like a poisoned arrow ! I longed to meet him alone—alone on the solitary highway, or in some deep and voiceless solitude, in any sequestered place where there would be none to see or to separate us ; and where, with sword and dagger, we might prove which was the better man, or which was the greater braggart of the two. For the

present, there was nothing for me but to retreat, leaving him in quiet possession of the battlefield and of the contested prize, alas ! for hope, had I none ! That fickle fortune would ever afford to one so humble, a prospect or a plea for disputing her hand and love with the son and heir of Pappenheim, the rival of Tilly—he whose pride made him spurn even the Golden Fleece was more than a madman's dream.

Had the gallant old Duke been severe upon me as his prisoner—nay, had he even been less kind—I would have left nothing undone to carry off his daughter and wed her in the face of France and the Empire ; but the demeanour of Charles IV was too conciliatory to spur or foster such a thought of treachery in me.

After a residence in Paris, during that age of dissipation and vice when virtue and religion were alike made a mockery, it charmed me to find that, with all her beauty, her natural wit and shrewdness, Marie Louise was so innocent and so amiable. In short, I knew not which dazzled me most—her vivacity of thought and grace of expression, the beauty of her person, or the purity and sincerity of her heart, which (unchanged as when first I met her) loved me still, with a regard which was strengthened by a sentiment of pity for the deception of which I had been the dupe, and for the wrong that had thus been done me.

But Pappenheim had certainly overheard a considerable portion of our interview : he might thus know my route to the French camp, and put in practice some foul treachery ; for I believed that he and his compatriot, De Bitche, were capable of any atrocity.

I exchanged my cassock for a good buff coat, trimmed with broad bars of silver lace, a cuirass, and gorget, which, together with a basinet of tempered steel, were given to me by De Vandemont. I charged carefully my pistols, the recent gift of his father, examined the locks, and then placed them in my girdle, with a good dagger and sword. My papers and

despatches I had already secured in a secret pocket ; and the Prince, as he placed in my hand a passport signed by the Duke, told me that the master of the horse had selected the best steed in the ducal stables to replace the fine Spanish barb so wickedly destroyed by De Bitche. My old travelling-cloak, with a Spanish beaver, I presented to Sergeant Asfeldt, and a dear gift they proved to him in the sequel.

‘ You go by Dieuze and Sarrebourg ?’ said the Prince.

‘ Yes ; but would not a route by Rosiers and Luneville be safer ?’

‘ It would be a longer détour ; but as for the safety, I do not see much difference. De Bitche has property and adherents both at Luneville and Rosiers, and I suspect him of conspiring with Pappenheim, so keep well to the left of the main road to Elsace-Zaberne. They have just had a long conference in the court-yard ; I watched them from a window, and the moment it was concluded, De Bitche departed towards the bridge of the Meurthe, with ten petardiers of his company on horseback. Thus, I fear me, the Luneville road may be beset, and pray you to be wary.

‘ Beset by De Bitche ?’

‘ Sacre, yes !’

‘ A curse on him and on all his generation.’

It will not mend the matter : but in case you are actually watched, leave Nanci to-night, as pre-arranged ; but do not set forward, lest there be an ambuscade on one or both of the roads. There is an old chapel of St. Nicolas in the Wood, a mile below the city, on the right bank of the river. A pathway diverging to the left near an old stone cross leads directly to it ; there you can remain till morning, and then ride boldly forward. You will have a long summer day’s march before you, and by nightfall may see the ramparts of Elsace-Zaberne still glittering, I hope, with the helmets of Mulheim’s brave Lorrainers.’

I thanked Vaudemont, and bade him adieu with a depth of

feeling that must have surprised him ; but he was the brother of her I loved more than all the world beside ; and, moreover, with all his recklessness and devil-may-care spirit, he was a gallant and generous youth, who struggled nobly but vainly in after years to regild the faded glories of his house.

I rode from the palace and through the principal street of Nanci, that my departure might be seen by all who felt any interest therein ; and quitting the city by one of its northern gates, trotted along the well-wooded highway, that led towards the frontier. At the stone cross, which stood near a well, I turned my horse, as directed by the Prince ; and after throwing a sharp glance round me, to assure myself that no secret eye was upon me, I descended into a dell, covered by thick dark copsewood, and rode rapidly in search of the ancient chapel, in which, like a hero of the Round Table, I was to pass the night alone.

The sun had set beyond the valleys of the Meuse and the Moselle, and the last gleams of the west bathed with a saffron tint the walls and towers, the spires and ducal palace, of Nanci, as they rose to the eastward of my path, above green groves of full-bearing orange and plum trees.

Torrents of rain had recently fallen amid the woods and snows of the Vosges : thus the waters of the Meurthe were swollen, and I heard their current roaring in full flood as they rolled through the echoing woods of the valley I traversed.

Rising amid the coppice, on a knoll, I found the chapel of St. Nicolas—a plain but sturdy old Gothic structure, the low round arches, zigzag ornaments, and grimly-grotesque carvings of which declared it to be coeval, perhaps, with Charles, Lord of Lower Lorraine. It contained an altar and shrine of St. Nicolas, before both of which some oil-lamps, that were nightly lit by the old canonesses of a neighbouring establishment, were burning and sputtering in the currents of air. I unbitted and stabled my charger, relaxed his saddle-girths and

left him in one of the stalls built near the porch for the horses of visitors. Entering, I shut the door, rolled my cloak round me, and with my sword, pistols, and a flask of good brandy endeavoured to make myself at ease, after dropping a few coins into the visitors' box, lest I might depart with the shades of night and forget all about it on the morrow. I then composed myself to sleep on a bench at the lower end of the chapel.

The altar lamps flickered and flared in the currents of wind; but, as my eye became accustomed to their feeble light, the features of the chapel grew gradually clearer to my eye, and many a stone visage that was hideously grotesque, seemed to laugh and wink to me, from the carved corbeilles of the roof, and the massive bosses that clasped the interlacings of the groined arches. St. Nicolas, with a halo of gilded iron round his head, stood quaintly out in bold relief from the painted wall on one side; on the other, framed in marble, shone a large sheet of polished copper, whereon was written a complete history of the battle fought before the walls of Nanci in 1475 by Charles the Hardy, Duke of Burgundy, who, with the flower of his followers, was there slain by the soldiers of René, Duke of Lorraine. On this plate were graven the names and armorial bearings of all the Burgundian knights who perished with Duke Charles; and the list closed by a request that the pious reader would pray for their souls, as their bodies were all interred in this chapel of St. Nicolas.

There were certainly more pleasant places wherein to pass a night than that old chapel, with all its buried dead and gloomy associations of desperation and defeat; but Scot though I was, and deeply imbued, moreover, by that superstition which few of my countrymen are without, I thought not of the hacked helmets and knightly bones that lay beneath me, or of the chances of spectral appearances, as the mid-mirk hour of the night approached—as the air waxed colder and the altar lights grew dim—I thought only of my own wayward fate; of the strange passages of my life during the last few years; of the

dangers I had escaped and those I might yet encounter : of Louise, whom I loved so well—who loved me in return, but from whom I seemed hopelessly separated for ever.

How much more enchanting than the large and voluptuous Clara—she who for a time had so dangerously dazzled me—was the smaller and more delicately-formed Marie Louise—half-woman and half-angel ; like a poet's dream, a Raphael's happiest thought ! So perfect in her purity of form ; so beautiful in face, expression and thought.

'Ah, Marie Louise, there is none other like you in the world !' thought I, with mingled rapture and bitterness. 'Who ever loved me so well ? Yet we shall never see, never meet, never hear each other's voice again ! I can be reckless enough in battle now, for I have no mistress for whom to spare myself.'

The exhaustion of long toil and deprivation of rest, now began to steal over me, and I had fallen into a doze, to dream of Louise as Nicola, when a sound roused me, making me start to full and nervous wakefulness, as the whizz of the *first* shot in action might do. I started ! My horse was neighing in its adjacent stall, to me a signal sufficient that other nags were near. I thought of De Bitche with his ten petardiers, and cocked my pistols. I heard the hoofs of a horse ringing, as it was galloped down the path, across the wooded valley, and drawing nearer as it approached the chapel, till at last the sound become dull and muffled on the sward. I boldly threw open the chapel door to confront this midnight visitor, and by the dim light of the stars without, and the flicker of the altar lamps within, beheld a handsome young man, mounted on a powerful grey horse, with his cloak muffled up to his nose and his hat pulled down to his eyes ; but I soon perceived that he wore the long moustache and pointed *royale*, peculiar to the court of Louis XIII.

'Hark you, M. le Chevalier ?' said he.

'Who are you ?' I asked.

'I am René, Knight of Malta, one of the Duke's gentlemen

in ordinary. I had the pleasure of conducting you, monsieur, to the presence of my foster-sister to-day.'

' You mean Mademoiselle de Lorraine?'

' Marie Louise—yes.'

' And you are her foster-brother?'

' Yes, monsieur ; my mother nursed her ; I have taught mademoiselle to ride ; to throw off a falcon, and to shoot with the arbalest à jallet, as we name a little crossbow for throwing clay pellets. Were not such tasks a happiness ?'

' M. René, I envy you ; but what seek you here ?' I asked, with suspicion.

' I sought you, M. Blane, and I am happy to find that you are not gone. Are you not afraid of being robbed in this solitary place ?'

' I am afraid of nothing, M. René : fifty crowns are all I possess in the world.'

' But one's skin is of some value, and that may be perilled in these woods among wolves and outlaws.'

' To the point, M. le Chevalier de Malta,' said I, suspiciously : it was not merely to tell me all this you sought me. Perhaps you bring a message from Wolfgang Count Pappenheim ? If so——'

' What then ?'

' You are doubly welcome.'

The eyes of the Lorrainer sparkled.

' No, monsieur,' said he, ' I am not in the habit of bearing messages for M. Pappenheim : he is one for whom I have but little love——'

' Give me your hand, my dear M. René. I request to be admitted to a copartnery in that abhorrence.'

' You hate each other, then ?'

' 'Tis to avoid his assassin I am this night quartered like a paladin of old in this enchanted chapel ; for being in a wood, it must, of course, be enchanted.'

' Yes ; it is said that the spirit of Charles the Hardy stalks

forth every night at twelve o'clock, side by side with René of Lorraine, both cap-a-pie.'

' Well, twelve is long since past by my watch, and neither of these personages have gone forth, unless they have done so unseen by me. And so you, too, are at enmity with Pappenheim ?'

' Enmity deep, bitter, and undying !'

' We are allies,' thought I ; ' but, the devil ! we may be rivals, too !'

' In a dispute when hunting, Count Pappenheim, who is a rough and unlicked German cub, dared to strike me with his riding-rod—I, René of Gondrecourt, knight of Malta. Oh, M. Blane ! but for the solemn vow which binds me to my order, and but for the marriage which is about to be celebrated between him and mademoiselle my foster-sister, this dagger had laid him dead beside the deer which was the matter in dispute.'

' No vows bind me, dear Rene,' said I, pressing the hand of the young Chevalier ; ' and when Pappenheim and I meet, my sword, I hope, shall write on his plump German hide a full and fair apology for all our wrongs.'

' We heard of a strange accident just before I left the palace. The Count de Bitche and ten of his petardiers left Nanci on horseback this forenoon abruptly, and without the Duke's orders took the road to Luneville.'

' Indeed !' said I, becoming suddenly interested.

' Sergeant Caspar Alsfeldt of Vaudemont's musketeers—'

' A brave and kind old fellow ; he brought me prisoner to Nanci.'

' Well, he was despatched with an order for their immediate return ; but they mistook him for some one else, as he was dressed in a strange hat and cloak, so they fired and pistolled the poor man about sunset, and he is now lying dead on the road, about three miles from Nanci.'

' My brave sergeant ! he fell into the trap intended by the villains for me ; for doubtless the hat and cloak he wore were

mine. I may well thank Heaven for the foresight of Vaudemont.'

' Hence, M. Blane,' said René, grasping his reins, ' mademoiselle, my foster-sister, sent me to conjure you, by God's love and her own, to leave this place without delay, and to accept this little note, which contains her farewell to you. Adieu, monsieur—or rather au revoir, for we shall meet again in our helmets during some of those fine summer days on the banks of the Rhine.'

As he said this, René placed a note in my hand, put spurs to his horse, and, from the chapel door, rode down the wooded valley. The note was written on perfumed Dutch paper, tied crosswise by white ribbons, and fastened by a little red seal, bearing the winglets under a coronet.

I cut the ribbons with my dagger, and trembled as I read the note, by the dim flickering light of the altar.

It bore the signature of Marie Louise, and was written by herself, assuring me of her unalterable regard, and that death itself were more welcome to her than this projected union with Pappenheim: it contained little; but began by desiring me to forget her, and, like a dear paradox, ended by begging me to remember the pleasant days we had passed together, and though separated, to think kindly of her, as she would never cease to think of me but with sorrow and love.

This little billet occasioned in me the usual burst of transport such evidences of affection generally develop in lovers, all of which the reader knows very well; and I was carefully refolding, after reading it for the tenth time, when a sound caught my ear. I listened. It was a distant clock striking the hour of four. I looked up, and saw that already the altar lamps were sinking and about to expire, and that grey dawn was beginning to shine through the painted windows of the old chapel.

' Now,' thought I, ' let me to my saddie, and with wh.p and spur make this new nag of mine believe that he has Satan himself on his back !'

CHAPTER LIII.

THE TOWER OF PHALSBOURG.

WHEN I rode from the chapel of St. Nicolas in the Wood the morning was cool and delicious. The forests were clothed with luxuriant green foliage, that rustled pleasantly in the rising wind. The Meurthe flowed majestically through the broad and fertile valley between banks that teemed with fertility, or were covered by groves of wild apricot, plum, and orange trees.

Distant a mile or so rose Nanci, its old ramparts and plastered houses standing in relief against the cold sky, clear and white in the pale light of morning, for the sun was yet below the horizon, and the lingering stars that still twinkled amid the deep blue vault were reflected in the depths of the river that bathed the palace walls, while the sharp pinnacles of the cathedral spire cut the sky-line as they towered above every other feature of the city.'

'Adieu, Marie Louise,' said I, kissing my hand to the distant palace, as its casements began to gleam like plates of burnished gold; and as I crossed a wooded ridge, where the road suddenly dipped down towards the town and fortress of Château Salines, so famous for its saline springs, where salt has been manufactured since the days of Thierri of Alsace.

Riding rapidly without hindrance or molestation for twenty-two miles, I passed Dieuze between the banks of the Scille and another river, and then past Sarrebourg, a quaint old town which was quietly ceded to France by the Lorrainers in 1666. It is situated on the right bank of the Sarre, which flows from the wooded Vosges to the Lower Rhine, and is only fifteen miles westward of Elsace-Zaberne. I halted here at an hostelry named *L'Image de Notre Dame*, the sign-board of

which had been riddled by the bullets of Saxe-Weimar's Swedish Protestants. This house of entertainment stood immediately opposite the palace of Henri de Vestingen, the Archbishop of Treves.

Though now so near my destination, a stupid crayfisher, of whom I unfortunately inquired the way, misdirected me; and at nightfall, instead of being at the end of my journey, I found myself in a wild and sequestered district among the mountains, where the patois of the peasants—of whom I met but two—was so quaint and barbarous that I could scarcely understand one word they uttered. To make all this more unpleasant a storm was coming on; the sky grew black and lowering; the air was full of electricity, and warm rain-drops fell heavily and at long intervals.

After a time I found myself close to a small, compact, but closely-walled town in a deep valley of the Vosges. I approached the gate joyfully, and heard a sentinel challenge in pure French; but still precaution on my part was necessary.

‘Stand,’ cried he, ‘or I shall fire. France or Lorraine?’

To answer for either was dangerous; so I inquired,—

‘What town is this?’

‘Phalsbourg, on the frontier of Alsace.’

‘How far is Zaberne distant?’

‘Six miles to the north-east.’

‘Then I have ridden fifty-four miles to-day.’

‘From where, my friend?’

‘Nanci.’

‘Ha! from Nanci—indeed! well, pass on—do not advance one step, or I shall be compelled to fire.’ The match of his arquebuse glowed in the dark, as he blew it to enforce the threat.

‘Is this garrison French or Imperialist?’ I asked.

‘Return in the morning, and we shall each see what the other is like. Good night.’

‘Good night;’ and I rode off, as nearly as I could judge, in

the direction of Zaberne; and now the warm rain plashed in my face, and I heard the rising wind begin to roar in the hollows, and saw the ghastly green lightning playing about the black peaks of the Vosges.

Phalsbourg, belonging to princes of that title, who were vassals of Duke Charles, stands on an eminence overhanging a deep and narrow defile of these mountains. It is strongly fortified, and was founded for defence by Count John, Palatine of the Rhine in 1570, but was annexed to France by the treaty of Vincennes, when ruin was deepening on the fated house of Lorraine.

As Zaberne was only six miles distant, I deemed it wiser in me to ride on and endeavour to reach the French lines, than perhaps to fall into a trap by attempting to make good a night's quarters in Phalsbourg; but the storm of rain came on, and this, together with the darkness of the night and my total ignorance of the way—no one being abroad to act as guide—caused me to ride almost at random for several miles along a rocky and devious path, until I reached a pile of buildings that rose in the centre of the way, and I found myself before a castle—one of those huge, fortified mansions of the middle ages, having walls of enormous height and thickness, with dungeons below, battlements above, gates and drawbridges in front.

A passing gleam of lightning revealed to me a lofty square tower defended by outworks, having a deep ditch, palisadoes, and a drawbridge, which was up. It was evidently the castle of some Alsatian noble, probably a vassal of the Bishop of Strasbourg, to whom the province of Alsace at one time belonged. Being furnished with letters from king Louis on one hand, and with a passport from Duke Charles on the other, it now occurred to me that I should be pretty safe in venturing into this feudal tower, whoever might be its lord; and half choked by wind and rain, and tired of struggling to keep in check my horse, which swerved and plunged at every flash o'

lightning that reddened the sky and threw forward in full and sable outline the huge square mass of the castle. I hallooed loudly, but my voice was swept away by the wind; till, waiting for a lull, and gathering all my strength, I placed a hand to my mouth, and shouted thrice again.

‘ Halloo! ’ answered a voice from the outworks; an arched gate opened; I saw the glow of a red light flaring on the wet walls without, and on the swampy fosse below, while three or four armed men applied their hands to the counterpoise of the drawbridge, and with a clang lowered it into its socket. As I approached the wicket of the strong pallisadoes, it was carefully closed, and a voice demanded—

‘ Whence come you? ’

‘ From Nancy direct.’

‘ You are alone? ’

‘ As you see, quite alone. Come, come, my friend, do not keep me long at parley in such a storm of wind and rain.’

‘ But what seek you here? ’

Shelter; what the devil would one seek else in such a night as this? ’

‘ Enter,’ was the gruff reply.

I rode in, and found myself in an archway, off which opened two vaulted guardhouses, full of armed men. The bridge was wound up; the barriers were closed; I gave my horse to a groom, and found myself housed in the castle of—I knew not whom.

‘ How name you this fortress? ’ I inquired of one who seemed to bear some authority, if I might judge by his polished cuirass and triple-barred helmet.

‘ The tower of Phalsbourg, monsieur.’

‘ And who commands here? ’

‘ An officer of the Duke of Lorraine.’

‘ Good; lead me to him, I am furnished with papers from Monseigneur le Duc.’

‘ This way, monsieur, follow me.’

As we proceeded through the archway, across the court and entered the keep, neither the enormous thickness of the walls nor their height surprised me so much as the great number of well-armed men who crowded all the chambers, or were lounging on wooden benches, smoking, and polishing their accoutrements, in the whitewashed corridors, which were lighted by candles, placed in reflecting sconces of bright tin. However, I remembered the time and situation ; that this was a frontier castle, garrisoned by Duke Charles against the French ; and I recalled, too, the magnificence and military state maintained by the French nobles, even in time of peace, and of this, the style of the Marechal Duke of Sully, Grand Master of the Ordnance and Governor of Poitou, when living in retirement at his castle of Lillebonne, may serve for an example. He had constantly about him one company of French guards, and another of Swiss, who attended him on horseback when he went abroad, on which occasions the great bell of the castle was rung, a bombarde fired, and all his servants stood in two lines, bareheaded, from the staircase to the outer gate. At table, two guards, with partisans, attended him, and only two chairs were placed there, one for him and another for his duchess, while their guests, no matter how high their rank or long their lineage, were merely accommodated with stools without backs.

As we ascended to the hall of this fortress, the sound of loud laughter, occasional oaths, and the rattle of dice-boxes, met my ear, while the fumes of wine, a close atmosphere, rendered more oppressive by the light of many lamps and the breath of several debauchees, saluted me, and on entering I beheld a very remarkable scene.

The hall was lofty, and hung with gaudy Haarlem tapestry.

It was crowded by cavaliers in rich and variously-coloured dresses of Blois and Utrecht velvet, laced with gold and silver ; most of them had on cuirasses and gorgets, and all wore swords, daggers, and silver-mounted pistols, hung by

swivels or hooks to their girdles. Many of these men were too evidently intoxicated. Some smoked, or sang, or slept on the side benches; a few were intent on gambling at a table apart; others were drinking wine or beer from vessels of all kinds, and some were engaged in coarse banter or dalliance with four or five gaudily-dressed and profusely-painted demoiselles, who, if they had been found in the Scottish camp of Marshal Hepburn, had assuredly been sent to ride the wooden horse at the quarter-guard.

Among the armed men present, I recognised the Swiss officer, M. Schreckhorn.

‘Place, messieurs, place for a gentleman from Nanci!’ exclaimed my conductor; and all turned towards me with interest and surprise, and several said—

‘M. le Commandant! where is M. le Commandant?’

‘Here,’ growled a voice, as a tall, swarthy man, who, with his laced pourpoint unbuttoned, and his black hair dishevelled, had been asleep on a fauteuil, started up, and I found myself confronted with the—Count de Bitche.

He uttered a shout of savage and half-drunken laughter; while, with a sinking heart, I found that, by my own unwarness, I had fallen into a deadly trap at last.

CHAPTER LIV.

DE BITCHE.

‘M. l’ABBÉ, alias M. Blane de Blanerne, alias M. Scaramouche le Moucharde, welcome! most welcome to share the hospitality of Phalsbourg!’ exclaimed De Bitche, twisting up his enormous black moustache; ‘by Beelzebub, but this is a most unexpected pleasure, for we had quite given up all hope of seeing you again!’

'Perhaps so, M. le Comte, after murdering a poor soldier, in mistake for me, on the Nanci road.'

'Your predilection for wandering outside your own camp is marvellous; but we must cure you of it. Corbœuf! I would that Pappenheim were here, to share with me the pleasure of giving you a welcome.'

When I gazed on the demon-like eye of this infamous noble—a strangler, a gambler, and debaucher—I almost believed in the sorceries and diablerie imputed to him by the simple peasantry of Alsace and Lorraine.

'Well, mon condottiere,' continued the Count, in his bantering manner; 'you gaze at me curiously—you remember having met me before, I think?'

'Those who once behold your face, will never forget it,' said I, making a violent effort to repress my growing anger.

'Oh, milles demons! one could not be mistaken then?'

'No, M. le Comte—those who once see your visage, will never behold another like it.'

'Especially if they are in your perilous perdicament. You walk stiffly—your spurs drip blood. By St. Nicholas! M. Blane, you have ridden fast from Nanci; but not fast enough to escape me, who left it before you; though six miles further on you would have found Messieurs Hepburn and Lavalette, peppering Zaberne (a bitter reflection certainly) with culverin and caliver. Had your horse wings? But we shall not inquire. My dear M. Blane, I have you here snug enough, and here you shall remain; for unless you write me a little billet to my dictation, I shall hang you like a dog.'

'Hang?' I exclaimed, laying my hand on my sword.

He nodded his head, adding,

'Unless you pen for me a little billet.'

'A billet?'

'Milles demons! yes--I speak plain enough.'

'To whom?'

'Mademoiselle de Lorraine,' said he, in a hoarse whisper

‘ Count, you are a villain !’

‘ M. le Commandant !’ exclaimed at least twenty men, knitting their brows and grasping their swords.

‘ Nay, nay, gentlemen,’ said he, ‘ be patient, I pray you. It is a defect of these Scots to be somewhat plainly spoken.’

‘ And to be truthful too,’ I said with ungovernable fury, while unsheathing my sword ; but it was barely out of the scabbard, when the rough hands of a crowd of armed men were laid upon me, and in a moment, I was denuded of my belt, with its poniard and pistols, my sword and purse of fifty crowns, with all my papers, while I was held so tightly on every side that I could scarcely breathe. My despatches were valueless to me, compared to the farewell note of Marie Louise.

‘ M. le Comte,’ exclaimed a bloated young subaltern of Swiss, who was looking over my papers ; ‘ here is a letter from mademoiselle—’

‘ De l’Orme—yes !’ interrupted De Bitche, abruptly, closing the sentence to mislead his followers, and snatching the letter of Louise from the startled discoverer thereof ; ‘ and on peril of your life,’ he added, ‘ speak no more of it.’

‘ But, M. le Comte,’ said Schreckhorn, ‘ here is a protection from Monseigneur le Duc, dated at Nanci, yesterday. This, at least, must be respected.’

‘ A vile forgery—put it in the fire ; every spy has papers.’

The protection given to me by Vaudemont was then consigned to the flames.

‘ And here is a despatch sealed with the royal arms of France, and addressed to M. le Chevalier Hepburn, marshal and general of the Scots with the army of the Rhine.’

‘ Bon—diable ! give me *that* !’ shouted De Bitche, making a snatch at the envelope, which contained the brave Hepburn’s diploma of Marshal of France ; ‘ and now away with the moucharde to the turret above the river ; but, off with his *uff* coat first. Aha, messieurs ! ’tis laced, and of the true

Parisian cut. Off with it, for by the favourite corn of St. Nicolas, he will never need it more !'

My buff coat was rudely torn off me by some half-drunken Swiss and Germans, among whom it formed an object of furious contention. I was then dragged through the hall, along a dark passage, and up a narrow stone stair, to a little arched door, through which I was thrust into an apartment lighted only by fitful gleams of the moon, across which the stormy clouds were hurrying in black masses ; and there left to my own anxious and alarming thoughts.

CHAPTER LV.

THE TURRET.

My first impulse was to look from the window of this apartment. It was large for the window of a turret, but so closely grated that the iron bars, together with its height from the ground, precluded all chance of escape either by rope or ladder, if I had them. The fire-place was also enclosed by a complicated iron-grating, so that the chamber seemed peculiarly adapted for retention, escape by the chimney being even contemplated and provided against. The storm was dying away ; the rain ceased to lash the walls and batter on the windows. I could see the steep brows and black defiles of the Vosges, over which the murky shadows of the clouds and the wavering gleams of the moon were flitting. Lofty and dusky these mountains were—dark and solemn too, seeming to approach as the moonlight gleamed along their rocky steeps, and anon receding into gloom as the crape-like clouds wrapped up the moon in their pall of murky vapour.

Morning soon began to dawn ; and, as the sun came up, the storm, with all its clouds and shadows, its gusts of rain and

wind, retired westward over the mountains, together with the gloom of night.

The steep Vosges looked green and bright, with all their thick waving woods and chestnut groves, many of these mountains being clothed from base to summit in foliage. In the valleys and defiles between them, nestled little thatched hamlets, bordered by rich meadows, by flower gardens, and by pastures of emerald green ; in others I saw the lurid gleam of furnaces, where the copper-ore was smelted in mines that were old as the days of Hilderic, King of the Franks, who was lord of all Alsatia.

As the morning brightened and the day wore on, voices loud and clamorous came at times along the corridor from the hall, mingled with the tipsy shrieks and coarse laughter of women. These sounds gave me vague alarm. De Bitche and his ruffianly companions might be arranging and planning my death ; and the contemplation of enduring a lonely and helpless murder at their hands filled my soul with a sickly horror which it is impossible to portray.

I knew the cruelties of which the Imperialists were capable. I knew that Colonel Sir James Ramsey, one of Scotland's best and bravest officers, was enclosed by them in a chamber of the castle of Dillingen, on the Danube, and there *starved to death*—he a prisoner of war, taken gallantly in battle under the Swedish banner. I knew that, like Caribs or Mohawks, these Austrians frequently murdered or mutilated their prisoners. At New Brandenburg they put a whole Scottish garrison to the sword, and tore the heart of Major Dunbar from his breast. At the dreadful sack of Magdeburg they rent the children from their mothers' wombs before they burned them both. In Saxony they roasted men before slow fires ; In Silesia they boiled them like lobsters, to force them to discover hidden wealth ; and in Lower Germany, committed such atrocities as were enough to bring a curse upon the house of Hapsburg.

My comrades were only six miles distant ; twenty, perhaps thirty, thousand men were there, who, to save me, would each man have lent a hand to tear Phalsbourg from its foundations. This was a bitter, an agonising reflection ! But that Marie Louise might never know the barbarous death I suffered for her sake was the bitterest thought of all ! The hope of acquainting the Prince of Vaudemont of my danger was as vain as the chance of my being able to communicate with the besiegers of Zaberne ; vain as the prospect of escape when I looked from the barred window of the lofty turret and saw the scarped hill and valley, overhung by the castle, a hundred feet below.

So, amid these reflections, the long night had passed away ; morning came without sleep once visiting my eyes ; and I felt neither hunger nor thirst, nor fear at times, but only a fierce impatience to have the last act of this diabolical drama played out. I knew that I was in the hands of desperate men, and had but one desire—that, if I was to be sent untimely out of this world, the malevolent De Bitche should not remain in it behind me. But I was without a weapon, and saw nothing that could be made one. With this thought I threw a hurried glance around my room.

The walls were covered by tapestry, which hung on tenter-hooks, and represented a banquet of the gods, whose scanty costume displayed a considerable oblivion of decency. They were hideously grotesque and mis-shapen ; but were regaling themselves on every variety of fish, flesh, and fowl, and were quaffing water from huge Rhenish tankards. Round the cornice were the arms, crests, and mottoes of the princes of Phalsbourg and the counts palatine of Lutzelstein, with whose family the former had intermarried, and whose castle stands on the skirts of the Vosges, but six miles nearer the frontier of Lorraine.

In a distant defile of the hills a gleam caught my eye : it wavered at first, but came again and again steadily. It was

the glitter of arms ; and, with a keen glance and an anxious heart, I watched that glitter sparkling afar off like a beam of hope : that it came from the arms of soldiers on the line of march I had no doubt. Anon it disappeared, but gave a new current to my bitter imaginings.

CHAPTER LVI.

THE LETTER TO MARIE LOUISE.

THE morning stole away and noon drew near : no food was brought to me ; but I did not miss it then, my mind being so agitated by alarm and useless regrets. I was agreeably surprised that the unscrupulous soldiers into whose hands I had fallen did not pistol me as a spy, for De Bitche had given them every reason to believe me one ; but that worthy personage had ulterior motives for sparing me so long.

About noon he entered my chamber abruptly, and carefully closed and double-locked the door on the inside, placing the key in the pocket of his buff coat. He then threw off his blue velvet cloak and large beaver hat, which was adorned by a long red feather, and surveyed me sternly. His aspect was in some respects handsome, but his form was colossal, and his bearing imperious. His eyes expressed an excitement which he endeavoured to veil under his usual cruel smile ; but a black expression and sinister glare hovered in them. His lower jaw was deep and square—a feature generally indicative of brutal strength and strong passions. In his waist-belt were placed a pair of pistols and a poniard without a sheath. He made an ironical bow to me, to which I replied by drawing my figure up to its full height, and loftily giving him a frown of contempt.

I have had tidings from Zaberne this morning,' said he ; ' Mulheim still holds out bravely, though Count Gallas has

failed to relieve him ; and so this night the Chevalier Hepbur^u means to attack Phalsbourg.'

' This night ! are you sure of that ?'

' Sure as that I now address a—dying man.

I smiled scornfully.

' Oh, smile on, monsieur ! His troops are now in sight horse, foot, and artillery coming to the attack.'

' Their arms had been the gleam I saw among the mountains. This night, you say—'

' Nay, this very day—perhaps within an hour, the castle may be taken.'

' And I ?'

' Shall be by that time buried deep enough below the pavement of the court, perhaps.'

' What do you mean, villain ? They will take the place by storm.'

' Do not flatter yourself ; for on reflection, M. Blane, I think they will not. I have made every disposition for a vigorous defence. Let ten thousand come, they are welcome to Phalsbourg.'

' You have some purpose, Count, in visiting me this morning ?'

' Of course ; I was about to allude to it.'

' And this purpose ?'

He smiled, and insolently surveyed me from head to foot.

' Count de Bitche, I demand to be liberated, or to be treated with the courtesy usually allotted to a prisoner of war. My parole—'

' Liberated ! that you may go back to Paris, and coquette with the King's mistress, to sup in her boudoir, to toy with her full fair arms, her chestnut hair, and adjust the *sachet à la violette* in her bosom ! Bah ! Pardieu, my fine fellow, you shall have no such indulgence. So, so, among your papers I have the honour to find a letter from Mademoiselle de Lorraine.'

‘ Insolent !’

‘ Well, I have something to propose, which, from the *tenor* of that letter, must, I presume, afford you pleasure.

‘ Indeed !’ said I, reading the wicked sneer of his heart in his eyes ; ‘ how kind of you, M. le Comte !’

‘ Very !’

‘ And this proposition—out with it.’

‘ Is merely that you should answer that letter.’

‘ You mock me, Count; never, while subject to your surveillance—never, while a prisoner in Phalsbourg.’

‘ Peste ! we shall see that,’ replied De Bitche, with a coarse laugh, as he twisted up his moustache, and continued to speak in this style, amusing himself with my situation, as a cat plays with the mouse it means to devour ; ‘ you love Mademoiselle de Lorraine ?’ said he, with mock softness.

‘ You are the last man in the world to whom I would make any such admission. Neither do I wish to hear her name from your polluted lips.’

‘ Mighty well, mon brave !’ said he, with flashing eyes ; ‘ we shall see how long this gallant bearing lasts. You would do anything to serve mademoiselle ; you would even lay down your life to insure the happiness of hers, I presume ?’

‘ I would—Heaven knows I would, with joy !’

‘ Oh ! ’tis a mere trifle that, when we love a woman ; so I shall give you, my dear fellow, an opportunity of performing that pretty trifle.’

What do you mean, M. le Comte ?’ said I, making a step towards him ; but he placed the table between himself and me, and kept a hand on his pistols.

‘ You shall see. But ha ! what is that ?’

‘ A shot—another and another !’ I exclaimed with joy, as we heard three dropping and distant shots. Then followed the closer rattle of musketry, and the sound of a drum beaten rapidly.

‘ And now hark ! My fellows answer from the tête-du-

point, your comrades have come within range; they are, I repeat, most welcome to Phalsbourg. Anon I will be with them. And now for you: mademoiselle knows your handwriting?

‘She does—having frequently seen it at Paris

‘And your signature too, probably?’

‘Yes.’

‘Then take pen and ink, and write after me.’

‘Excuse me, M. le Comte,’ said I, trembling with exultation, as I saw a brigade of French artillery, consisting of ten pieces of cannon, on field carriages, with tumbrils and waggons, each drawn by four horses, pass at full gallop along the green brow of the opposite hill, while the head of a column of infantry appeared beyond it, with pikes glittering and standards waving. Then the ordnance were wheeled into position, as the cannoniers and fire-casters sprang from their seats, unlimbered and proceeded to load. ‘Excuse me,’ I continued, ‘but there are some features in yonder landscape so very interesting that I must look for a moment.’

‘Yonder preparations are of no moment to you,’ said De Bitche, stamping his foot and growing pale with anger, as he drew a pistol from his belt and cocked it, ‘take up that pen and write as I dictate, or’—and he swore an oath too frightful for me to repeat—‘I will lay you, where I have laid many a better man,—dead at my feet.’

I glanced at the Count and measured his strength with my own, which it far surpassed, for his proportions and muscles were gigantic; I measured too the distance that lay between us; by one bound I could have cleared it, but a bullet would reach me with the rapidity of light. A contest with a man more powerful than myself by one half, and one who was so well armed, while I, faint with toil, was quite defenceless, would have been recklessly to throw away all chance of safety and escape; and now, while the roar of falconets on the bartizan overhead shook the keep from cope to groundstone

while the French cannon opened from the brow of the opposite hill, I dipped the pen in the ink, and gave the Count a furious glance to which he replied by an insolent laugh, and pointing with the muzzle of his loaded pistol to a sheet of fine white Dutch paper, said—

‘ Begin, monsieur, for I am leaving M. Schreckhorn alone to contend with those friends of yours, the feather-bed soldiers of Louis XIII. Begin thus—

‘ *My dear Mademoiselle de Lorraine—*’

Curious to learn what he had in view, and moreover to gain time, I slowly wrote the preamble, and he continued to dictate, amid the concussion of the adverse artillery, which shook the old feudal castle to its basement.

‘ *Now that I am beyond the reach of your many attractions, a sentiment of remorse compels me to inform you that the love I profess to bear you—have you got all that down, my young moustache?*’

‘ Yes, M. le Comte—proceed.’

‘ *The love I have professed to bear you is alike absurd and futile. Mademoiselle, you have lavished all the young affection of your pure and noble heart upon a vile, a false, and worthless object; for I tell you, with shame and contrition, that I am already the husband of a pretty citoyenne of Zaberne—*’

‘ But this is an infamous falsehood, Comte !’

‘ Proceed, I command you,’ replied De Bitche, levelling his pistol across the table, and throwing a furious glance at the French cannon, the shot from which were coming over the valley with a sound between a boom and a scream.

‘ *That I desire you will cease to think more of me, and pardon the presumption of one who is every way unworthy of you; who begs to return your letter, and to subscribe himself, Mademoiselle, your most devoted servant—Done at Zaberne—*’

‘ But this is Phalsbourg?’

Again the black muzzle of the pistol threatened me.

‘ *The 15th day of June—God and our Lady take you into their*

holy keeping. And now, M. Blane—your signature in its usual fashion.'

'Rascal!' thought I; 'so this is the plan of your little campaign?'

'Your signature—your signature,' he continued, pressing his finger upon the trigger of the loaded pistol.

A cold perspiration burst over me. I was like one who is in a partial stupor, with a pressing sense of death and danger from which escape was impossible. I knew that if I delayed to sign he would shoot me in his rage; and that if I signed the letter, either by a real or feigned signature, it would prove my own death-warrant, for then I should also be shot, instantly perhaps, while the document thus extorted from me, would be duly forwarded to Marie Louise, and being dated from *Zaberne*, would remove all suspicion of force or fraud, and cast obscurity over the place and manner of my murder, and in her mind disgrace my memory for ever.

These were dreadful reflections to crowd into one short moment of time; but to gain one moment more was, to me, of priceless value. In one hand I held the extorted letter; in the other the still wetted pen.

'Sign—sign or die!'

I signed my name carefully, and slowly blotted it with blotting-paper, seeking a moment when the withdrawn pistol would enable me to spring at the throat of De Bitche; but alas! that moment never came.

CHAPTER LVII.

THE RANDOM SHOT.

My life hung by a hair, as it were; but this thorough-paced bravo was too wary for me.

Before I could either rush upon him, or tear the document to pieces, he snatched it from me, and thrust me

furiously back by the muzzle of the loaded pistol, which by heaven's mercy, rather than his, did not explode. He then placed the letter carefully in his breast, and dragged me by the throat—for his power and strength were far greater than mine—to the window.

'Look your last upon your friends, for in ten minutes I will hang your dead body from the tower-head, and the ravens of the Vosges may be picking your bones, when Mademoiselle Louise is reading your letter. Presumptuous fool,—who dared lift his eyes in love to the bride of Pappenheim—to a daughter of the house of Lorraine! But on receiving this letter, with its enclosure, she will cast you from her heart and memory, and accept with joy the lover chosen by her father and the Emperor. Look—what do you see?'

'Coward' I exclaimed, 'coward and villain! Ah! if Hepburn knew I was here?'

And would it avail you?' he asked, while his eyes filled with a dusky light, and I felt his hot, and snake-like breath on my face; 'but 'tis not Hepburn who commands yonder.

'Who then?'

'Roger de St. Lacy, the Due de Bellegarde. See! yonder is his regiment, the dragoons of Brissac, with an infantry battalion of Picardy. Look ye, Scot, and look well,' (here his voice trembled, and grew hoarse, with an emotion so wild and fierce that I believed him to be mad or drunk with wine and pride,) 'for I tell thee by the God who hears us, thou seest the last of war, and all its terrors—of the sun, and all his glory!'

He suddenly raised the pistol to my head—

There was a screaming sound—a tremendous crash, as if the solid keep had rent beneath our feet to its deep foundations, and I was thrown, breathless, and stunned for a time, on the floor. In a minute, or less, sense returned, and the knowledge of immediate danger restored my energy. I staggered up, and looked around me.

A cannon-shot—whether discharged at random, or because our figures had been seen struggling at the large window of the turret, I know not; but this cannon-shot—an eighteen-pound ball—had entered the aperture, dashing it to pieces, and tearing, as if it had been a gossamer web, the strongly interlaced bars of the iron grating, half-buried itself in the stone-wall beyond us. A large splinter of the grating, and a fragment of stone, had struck De Bitche on the breast and right arm, hurling him furiously on the floor, and causing the pistol, with which he was threatening my life to explode, and send its outlet through the ceiling. He was lying on his back and breathing slowly, with his eyes half-closed, and so far turned back within their sockets, that the white of them alone was visible.

Amid the din of the cannonade, and the many sounds which filled this fortified tower, the crash of this random shot, and the report of the pistol were unnoticed or unheard.

De Bitche was moaning heavily, and when I placed a foot upon his breast, a half-stifled sob escaped him. I surveyed him steadily, and I fear me furiously, as with something like a laugh of exultation, I possessed myself of his girdle, with its poniard, and remaining pistol; and I now deem it singular, that in the revulsion of my emotions, and in my fury and despair, having so many affronts to avenge, I did not then and there beat out his brains with my heel, or strangle him by placing my foot on his neck to destroy him as I would have done a wild beast. I placed the loaded pistol to his head, and said,

‘ Recover your senses as quickly as possible, M. le Comte; I have little time for trifling.’

‘ Viper!’ he groaned, ‘ it is *your* turn now.’

‘ And believe me, I shall not neglect it,’ I replied, spurning him with my foot; ‘ ha—ha! M. le Comte, I hope *your* mother has been forgiven—’

‘ For what, fellow?’

‘ For bringing into the world, a villain so unparalleled as you! Now, hear me. You have in your possession a letter which you compelled me to write a few minutes ago—to write with this pistol at my ear. You will please to deliver up that letter?’

He hesitated.

‘ The letter!’ I hissed through my teeth; ‘ or, by heaven! I will cut off your head with this dagger, and toss it through that shattered window.’

By the left hand he drew it from his breast, and in doing this, I perceived by a futile effort he made to move the right arm, that it was *broken*. I carefully tore the letter into the smallest pieces, and scattered them about.

‘ Good! now M. le Comte, I have another favour to ask. The letter of Mademoiselle de Lorraine?’

This he also delayed to give; but the pressure of my foot on his breast, proved an argument so persuasive, that he was forced to yield, and I carefully consigned it to my breast.

‘ Now, M. le Comte, I have still another little favour to ask; the pass-word for the day—the parole—speak, or die! ha, ha! a minute ago, it was you who said, “ sign or die;” the parole?’ I added, fiercely, or I will crush you, like the worm you are—ay, strangle you as the Lady of Lutzelstein was strangled.

A frightful pallor came over his damp visage at this threat, and under his heavy black moustache he faltered out—

‘ ‘Tis the name of the Emperor.’

‘ Mathias?’

‘ Yes.’

‘ And the countersign?’

Again he delayed.

‘ Quick—quick.’

‘ Vienna.’

‘ Good—now I have done with you, until your arm is cured, and we can meet again in our helmets, and under better auspices; and then—dog, coward, and murderer—be wary of the

worthless life a mistaken humanity causes me to spare to-day!"

Regardless of his broken arm, and of the sickening agony it caused him, I bound his hands behind him by his waist-belt. I then tore his scarf in two; tied his heels by one half, and with the other gagged him, in such a position, that he could neither summon aid nor give an alarm. I then possessed myself of his violet-coloured velvet mantle, and broad Spanish hat, and tearing out the scarlet plume by which it might be recognised, armed with his poniard and pistol, I left the chamber.

On withdrawing, I gave him a farewell glance; and never did I read in human eyes, the snaky, fiend-like expression of hatred, rage, baffled spite, and bodily agony, that glared in those of the bruised and fettered De Bitche, when I left him with a fierce and mocking laugh. I double-locked the chamber-door, and as I crossed the deserted hall, flung the key into a fire of wood that blazed on the hearth, under the arched fireplace.

'Now,' thought I, 'my tormentor is secure enough!'

CHAPTER LVIII.

THE SALLY.

THIS sombrely tapestried and stately apartment seemed at first quite unoccupied; and for a moment the idea of throwing burning faggots on the floor, and setting the hated tower on fire, occurred to me; but the desire of effecting *my* own escape lay nearer my heart than the destruction of Phalsbourg. Moreover, I observed one who had escaped my first survey, a woman, asleep, or in a swoon on a bench; a tipsy courtesan of the last night's orgies, and an emotion of pity restrained me. Arming myself with a sword, I rushed to the court-yard, which was crowded by the garrison, and was then the scene of all the

infernal hurlyburly incident to a furious assault and vigorous defence.

'Mathias and Vienna,' I repeated; 'these are the magic words which are to set me free; but amid this vile uproar who is to receive them—to whom can they be given?'

Finding their shot too light for battering purposes, already the French cannoniers were beginning to slacken their fire against the donjon of Phalsbourg, the old grey walls of which had long been worn by time, and battered in war. I gave an inward glance at the square projecting turret, where my proud and boastful enemy was lying, bruised, bound, gagged and everyway baffled, humbled, and secured. Then hurrying forward, I joined the crowd of armed men who were lining the walls of the tête-du-pont. Here eight iron 24-pounders were pouring a close and destructive cross-fire against the companies of the regiment de Picardy, then moving up to assault the rampart, and bearing ladders to cross the ditch, though the musketry from the tower told fearfully upon their ranks.

To prevent recognition, I partially blackened my face by gunpowder; possessed myself of a dead man's musket and collar of bandaliers, and stepped upon the platform, within which the killed and wounded men lay thick. I had scarcely taken my place upon the parapet, when a small shell, or bombeille, exploded in the air, just above my head. Some of the fragments fell on me, but without doing harm. Then I fired a few *blank* rounds, to gain time, or to enable me to observe what was going on; and there I ran considerable risk; for the hat, so recently borrowed from my friend M. le Comte, was torn off my head by a musket-shot.

Situated on rocks, that are steep and inaccessible on every side save the west, the tower of Phalsbourg is approached by a narrow causeway, which is cut by a deep ditch; and along this causeway, under a fire from the flankers which defended the drawbridge, the regiment de Picardy—that noble

old band, of immortal memory—advanced valiantly and resolutely to the escalade, with loud shouts of, ‘Vive Louis le Roi! Picardy to the assault! Picardy to the assault!’

They rushed to the edge of the trench, undeterred by the withering rain of lead that swept the causeway, piling it with dead and wounded men, many of whom rolled over it, down the defile on one hand, or into a foaming mountain-stream on the other,—on, on they came, led by their officers, splendidly-attired chevaliers in steel cuirasses, and velvet pourpoints, perfumed, laced, and ruffled; and at their head came one, whom before I had observed, with remarkable *sang froid*, to be alternately caressing his horse’s neck, and playing with his own hair, which was long and ringleted, like the tresses of a girl. On foot he now led the stormers, with a little standard of the fleur-de-lis in his hand; on his breast was the cross of the Holy Ghost, and in the band of his hat there was stuck a lady’s fan. By the latter, I knew him in a moment to be Roger de St. Lacy, Colonel of the regiment de Brissac, a brilliant and determined soldier, for whom one of the fairest coquettes at the court of France had procured the title of Duc de Bellegarde.

He had already reached the edge of that fatal fosse, and, brandishing his sword, shouted ‘Picardy to the assault! forward with the ladders! forward my braves! Vive Louis le Roi!’

There a shot struck him! I saw the crimson blood spout over his white uniform, as he bent forward and fell headlong into the ditch. This shot was fired by one beside me: I turned, and beheld M. Schreckhorn, the officer of Swiss, in the act of reloading his arquebuse, with a grin of triumph; and I had some difficulty in controlling my first impulse to brain him with the butt of my musket.

Here also fell the Sieur de la Rivière, captain of French musketeers, who having, it was affirmed, neglected to put on his scapular, was shot through the very place where the

Madonna's picture would have hung. He was brother of the celebrated Abbé de la Rivière, who, at this very time, having lost the royal favour by visiting Clara d'Amboise, was sent to the Bastille to study practical philosophy and new periwigs together.

Under a storm of lead and iron, the leading company had already thrown themselves into the fosse, and were planting their ladders against the sloping stone glacis of the redoubt, when Schreckhorn flung among them a *pate de grenades*, or earthen pot, filled with gunpowder and grenades, having iron spikes upon them; while at the same moment the petardiers of De Bitche, like brave and reckless fellows as they were, lifted bombs in their hands, lighted their fuses, and, with all their force, hurled them over the parapet into the crowded fosse below, where they exploded with the *pate*, destroying, tearing to pieces the unfortunate stormers, and paralysing the rest, who were already sufficiently disheartened by the loss they had sustained, and by the fall of their brilliant leader.

The assault was abandoned, and a precipitate retreat succeeded—a retreat galled by a fire of cannon, muskets, and arquebuses, from the ramparts of the tower and its outworks, while the stubborn Swiss, the fierce Imperialists, and infuriated Lorrainers, who composed the garrison, about eight hundred in all, raised a wild and tumultuous hurrah; for never before had the regiment de Picardy been known to retreat. Schreckhorn flung down his musket and drew his rapier, exclaiming, ‘Lorraine and the Emperor! the Emperor and Lorraine! A sortie! volunteers for a sortie! Fall in, my comrades! fall in!’

A tumultuary mass of musketeers, pikemen, and Swiss halberdiers, about four hundred strong, formed in something like military order, and led by Schreckhorn in person, now rushed towards the barrier gate of the tête-du-pont; and with this mass I mingled, taking care to keep well in the rear

ranks, and to avoid being conspicuous, resolving on the earliest opportunity to conceal myself, or feign death. But I soon abandoned the last idea; for, when we crossed the drawbridge, I beheld, to my horror, the brutal Swiss and Austrians murder all the French wounded by braining them with the bolls of their halberds or the butts of their muskets; and in this villany M. Schreckhorn set the example, by twice passing his sword through the body of the Sieur de la Rivière.

The fall of the Duc de Bellegarde prevented proper measures being taken to secure a retreat. Already the French artillery were far down the valley, retiring at a trot towards Zaberne, and (fortunately for those who composed the sortie) escorted by the dragoons. The regiment de Picardy was following them in confusion, their rear maintaining a desultory fire with our front, as we proceeded over broken and rocky ground, on the skirts of a chesnut-wood, near a steep cliff, at the foot of which the mountain river ran with a hoarse and brawling sound. Here I took an early opportunity of loitering in the rear; and seeing a large pile of dried branches and withered leaves collected together by some woodman prior to removal, I first affected to drop a shoe, and, when adjusting it, contrived to be left completely in the rear. Then, instead of rejoining, I concealed myself in the heap of forest spoil, drawing in my musket after me, and concealed every portion of my person as carefully as if I had been tucked in, like a babe in the wood, by the kind birds of the popular ballad.

At that moment the regiment De Picardy made a stand, and I heard their drums beat a charge; then followed some heavy firing, and their musket-shot crashed among the trees overhead, and, with a dull, heavy sound, tore up the ground near me. I lay still and breathless. With a fierce shout, the sally from Phalsbourg fell back before their sudden volley. I heard two men speaking near me in a hoarse and guttural

language. Heavens! One stumbled over the heap of leaves -I was discovered —no; not yet!

They proved to be two of Schreckhorn's Swiss musketeers, who had just come out of the castle to enjoy a little shooting at the French; and kneeling *behind* the pile which concealed me, they proceeded deliberately to exchange a few rounds of ball-cartridge with certain musketeers of Picardy, who were nestling in rear of a rock, at forty yards' distance. The Swiss fired with coolness shot after shot close to my ear, casting about and reloading their long heavy muskets; while the bullets of their adversaries crashed among the stones or branches, whitened the stumps of the trees, tore up the turf, and knocked about the dry leaves which concealed me.

Imagine my situation and my feelings while this continued; to find myself reduced to the position of a fascine, a sand-bag, a parapet for those devils of Swiss to fire over! In lying still I risked the bullets of my friends; in starting up to seek safety by flight, I risked death at the hands alike of friends and foes; and while I lay thus, with a palpitating heart and a reeling brain, at least twelve shots whistled harmlessly about me, and five or six knocked the withered leaves into the air.

At last the distant firing grew fainter; the regiment de Picardy was retiring! My heart began to beat more equally, and with less pain. My friends the Swiss shouldered their muskets and were proceeding to advance, when one of them, in stepping over the pile of leaves, placed a foot on me with such force and suddenness, that a faint cry of pain escaped me. They started back with a shout of alarm, which brought to the spot several of their comrades; and I was immediately pulled from my lurking-place, to find myself confronted by M. Schreckhorn, and other officers of the garrison, **who were mustering the skirmishers.**

CHAPTER LIX.

THE PAROLE.

INQUIRIES were first made as to whether I was wounded; then as to who I was, my rank and name—for my attire, to say the least of it, was rather peculiar, and my face was still begrimed with powder. A glance showed me the situation in which I was placed.

The brow of the cliff, on which I stood, overhung the stream that brawled through the wooded defile, past the square black tower of Phalsbourg; further off, down the valley, lay the little fortified tower of that name, and beyond it were the Vosges, green, dun, or brown, but all huge and many shadowed, piled peak on peak, fading and mellowing away in the distance. On the other hand, the wooded defile opened out into a broad and sunlit valley, clothed with waving vineyards. This valley led towards Zaberne; and there I could see the discomfited infantry of king Louis, halted at the distance of a mile; but whether preparatory to renewing the attack, or to retiring, I know not. Nearer were the dragoons of Brissac, who had now fallen back to cover the rear of their foot; and nearer still were ten cavaliers in brilliant trappings, whose helmets and corslets, as they caracoled to and fro in the green meadows as if loth to retreat, flashed back the rays of the morning sun. On beholding them, a new impulse awoke within me, for I believed them to be ten gentleman of the Garde du Corps Ecossais, and eventually, my surmise proved correct.

Around me, and scattered over the brow of the grim cliff which overlooked all this panorama, were the prostrate forms of some twenty or thirty soldiers, killed or wounded in the skirmish; and close by me, were the men of the sally, falling

into their ranks preparatory to marching back to the tower, under the orders of M. Schreckhorn's second in command.

A rapid and hopeless glance told me all this; and then I turned to meet, and if possible to baffle, the suspicious questions of the warlike Switzer, who wore a quaint old jagged suit of harness of the last century, and carried a pair of long pistols in his leatheren girdle, while he wielded one of those enormous halberds, to which the countrymen of Tell have been so partial in all ages.

'Who are you, monsieur?' asked Schreckhorn, in his execrable French.

'Faith, I can scarcely tell,' said I.

'A peculiar state of mind—perhaps a prick of a sword might enlighten you? Speak!'

'I am one of your garrison of Phalsbourg,' I replied, with confidence, assured that to falter now, would destroy me.

'Does any one know this man?' asked Schreckhorn, looking around him; but not one of all the soldiers who crowded near, responded to his question.

'The Count de Bitche knows me well, and will answer for my honour and courage,' said I.

'We have only your word for that; but does it look like either honour or courage to skulk under this pile of leaves during an action? You say you are one of our soldiers?'

'But I am *not* one of your soldiers.'

'What then?'

'A simple volunteer.'

'I do not recognise you.'

'How should you, M. Schreckhorn, when you came to Phalsbourg but yesterday or the day before?'

'Peste! that is true; but then you cannot have any objection to return with us.'

'I have a most decided objection, M. le Capitaine.'

'Parbleu!"

‘I do not choose to serve longer under the Count de Bitche.’

‘This is rank mutiny; but perhaps you would prefer to serve under the enemy?’

‘I have not said so. A volunteer chooses his own leader; it is the rule of war.’

‘From whence came you last?’

‘Champagne.’

‘Aha—France!’ said Schreckhorn, with kindling eyes, and I found that I had made a false move. ‘You issued out with us; speak quick, fellow, for our troops are marching in, and yonder ten troopers are nearer than I like. You joined our sortie?’

‘My presence here implies that I did so,’ said I, haughtily, and gathering confidence on perceiving that some five or six petardiers, who remained by the side of Schreckhorn, all the soldiers of the sortie, were now marching into Phalsbourg.

‘Then you must know the password for the day?’

‘I know both parole and countersign.’

‘What are they?’ he asked, in a gentler tone.

“Mathias” and “Vienna.”

‘False, by St. Nicholas! Here is a spy!’ exclaimed Schreckhorn, seizing me.

‘These words were given to me by the Count in person.’

‘Thou liest! The Count has not been seen among us to-day.’

‘And the passwords ——’

‘Are “Gallas” and “Prague.”’

‘Then the villain has deceived me,’ said I, as the petardiers laid hold of me; and just at that moment a soldier came running breathlessly towards us, crying, as the devil would have it—

‘Hola, M. Schreckhorn! hola?’

‘What is the matter, fellow?’

‘The spy we took last night has escaped from the turret,

leaving in his place M. le Commandant, robbed and half murdered.'

'Mordieu! then this is our man. I must have been blind or mad not to recognise him even in this tatterdemalion dress, and with that visage of his, so artfully blackened!'

'Shoot him!' cried a petardier, drawing a pistolette from his girdle. 'Tête Dieu! an ounce of lead, my boy, will pay your passage to the other world, and here it is.'

'Cut him down!' suggested another, drawing his sword.

'Nay, take him back, and let M. le Comte deal with him, in person,' said the messenger.

'No, no,' added a fourth; 'diable! don't trouble us with prisoners, M. Schreckhorn; they do nothing but eat up the rations.'

They proceeded, however, to drag me towards the tower of Phalsbourg, and then I shuddered when contemplating all I might suffer there, and at the idea of confronting De Bitche when flushed by pain and vengeance. But aware that to resist seven well-armed men would be an act of folly, I could only glance hopelessly at the horsemen, who were now galloping along the valley, obviously with a view to cut off Schreckhorn and his six stragglers.

'Here come those ten cavaliers of the enemy's horse,' said a petardier; 'and this fellow grows heavier at every step.'

'Unless we shoot him and run, we shall be cut off, M. le Capitaine,' urged a second.

'And they are Gardes Ecossais, by all that is infernal!'

'These fellows will follow us up to the very gate of Phalsbourg,' said Schreckhorn.

'Bah! I have a petard at the foot of yonder tree, M. le Capitaine,' said the first speaker; 'let us tie our moucharde to it, fire the match, and leave him to his friends, who may pick up his pieces at leisure.'

'A brilliant idea, comrade!' growled Schreckhorn, whose eyes flashed with rage and excitement at the unexpected

danger in which his parley with me had placed him, though his native love of bloodshed, cruelty, and novelty were tickled by the barbarous proposition of the petardier, whose words were acted upon in a moment. ‘Sang Dieu ! quick, quick : your straps and the petard ; we have not a moment to lose ; these fellows will be on us !’

I had scarcely time for breath or thought before my hands and feet were secured by straps, while the petard was bound to my breast ; and now, lest the reader may not know what this warlike invention is, I shall describe it briefly.

A petard is made of gun-metal, screwed upon a board two feet square, and holds usually about fifteen pounds of powder ; a vent is screwed into the hole, by which the iron case is filled. When fired, its explosion will blow to shreds the strongest gates and palisades. The French Huguenots were the first who invented them, and by their means captured the city of Cahors in 1579.

A pistol was snapped, and the slow-match lighted, and then, with a brutal laugh, M. Schreckhorn and his soldiers rushed down the hill towards Phalsbourg, looking back ever and anon to watch the expected explosion.

Though hardened by war, and familiarised to its dangers, this petard—this frightful engine of death—pressing like a charged bomb upon my breast, filled me with a horror too great for description, for realisation, or for utterance, and existence became a stupor ! I was unable to move—to cry out—to breathe ! I felt nothing—saw nothing ! I knew nothing ! all my thoughts and feelings, if I possessed them, were absorbed in one overwhelming sense of panic ! I was surrounded by a black and wavering chaos, amid which I saw a brilliant and luminous spark, close to my face, consuming, shrinking, and expanding ; this was the touchpaper, communicating with the petard to which I was tied.

Suddenly the sense of danger and immediate death became too great for my whole nervous system. Bound as I was,

powerless, paralysed, like one amid a crushing nightmare, a cry at last escaped me! Then, though fettered neck, hand, and heel, I rose to my feet, and in a wild endeavour to free myself from the dreadful engine of destruction to which I was bound, rolled over the cliff, and fell headlong through the air —down—down—I knew not how far!

There was a cold splash—a shock—as I cleft the waters of a river; then there was darkness, and a rushing, bubbling sound, as they closed over me; then came blinding light, as I rose again to the surface; darkness again, and a whirling of all the senses, as I sank the second time; and with that sinking a deep, deep sleep seemed to come upon me, and I remembered no more.

CHAPTER LX.

RESCUE.

A DULL and pricking pain over all my stiffened limbs, as the blood slowly and laboriously forced its way through vein and artery; a dim light in my aching eyes, as if the dawn were just stealing upon the night; a confused sense of sounds and voices growing more distinct and palpable, were the first sensations of returning animation I experienced.

I breathed with difficulty, and with that respiration life and energy came back to me. I found myself stretched at length upon a grassy bank, on which the warm sunshine played. My arms were free; the straps that bound them once lay beside me cut and severed, with the unexploded petard—unexploded because it had been drenched in the water of the mountain stream, from which I had been rescued with difficulty by my friends; but chiefly by the bravery and exertions of the valiant border baronet, Sir Quentin Home of Redden, and the Chevalier Livingstone d'Angoulême, who plunged their

chargers in below that part of the stream in which I was struggling, and succeeded in getting me landed, as the former said, ‘Like a huge salmon grilse from the Tweed.’

I found myself surrounded by the familiar faces of nine cuirassiers of the Scottish Guard, led by old Patrick Gordon; and their surprise to find that the rescued man, the escaped prisoner, whom they had just fished from the river, was one of themselves—Arthur Blane—was great indeed. Revived by a good dose of brandy from Patrick’s flask, and by some dry garments which they gave me from their valises (for these cavaliers were all cap-a-pie, and in marching order), I looked up to the crag over which I had rolled in my terror and agony of soul; and on seeing that it was at least fifty feet high, and that I was safe and sound, wind and limb, and save a tremulous sensation, not a whit the worse of the whole affair, I thanked heaven for my release from Phalsbourg, and for my escape from all the perils that followed it.

Mounted on Livingstone’s horse, being as yet unable to walk, unless slowly and laboriously, we proceeded down the valley, and on looking back, from time to time, I saw the dark tower of Phalsbourg apparently rise higher among the mountains, as we descended.

‘We will return anon, Arthur,’ said our grim Marechal de Logis, ‘and bring to a severe reckoning this Count de Bitche and his garrison of outlaws: I suppose they are all raga muffins sprung from the barricades, as we say in Paris.’

‘And how about your siege of Zaberne?’ I asked, surprised to find myself conversing calmly, and among friends too, after all that had passed.

A cloud came over all their faces at the question.

‘It fell this morning,’ said Gordon.

‘And Hepburn—’

‘Alas! he fell with it. A shot killed him yesterday; but his death filled the troops with fury, so we carried the place by assault this morning. The King of France has lost a faithful

soldier, and old Scotland a gallant son. Rest him, heaven !' said Gordon, looking upward, with tears in his eyes; 'for there, in his bloody harness at Zaberne, lies cold and still a heart that never knew fear !'

'But the fear of God?' added Livingstone.

'Right, chevalier; Hepburn was pious as he was brave. He was the first soldier in Christendom, and we may never see his like again.'

Hepburn's fall shocked and grieved me, the more that he had died before I could announce to him that Louis XIII. had raised him to that rank so coveted by every chevalier in his army—maréchal of France; and conversing of his worth and bravery, rather than of my more recent adventures, which lay, perhaps, nearer my heart, we rode sadly and thoughtfully towards Zaberne.

I found the town breached and battered by cannon-shot, the houses riddled, the streets in ruin; encumbered by fallen masonry and unburied bodies. The soldiers were sullen and full of fury, especially the Scottish regiments, for the fall of their beloved commander, who was solemnly interred in the cathedral of Toul, where a magnificent monument was erected to his memory.*

We buried the other dead in one huge grave—friend and foe—and threw in their weapons with them. Still enough they lay in that ghastly trench, as we heaped the earth over them; though their uniforms were on and their weapons at hand, the strife of their gallant hearts was over; but if ever men went to heaven, they will be the brave fellows who died with Hepburn at Zaberne.

* Demolished by the revolutionists in 1793, his tomb was restored by order of the Emperor Napoleon III. in 1851, as a letter from the curé of the cathedral informed the author.—See Note at end.

CHAPTER LXI.

ISABEL DOUGLAS.

THE brave general of the Scots being thus slain by those citizens of Zaberne, who, as Cardinal de la Valette said, ‘ had been keeping him at bay for the last six months by playing at soldiers,’ the colonelcy of his celebrated Scottish regiment devolved upon his cousin, the Laird of Waughton, and the command of the army upon the Duke of Saxe-Weimar.

Under the Marquis of Gordon, the cuirassiers of the Garde du Corps Ecossais continued to serve in Alsace, with the combined army of French, Scots, Swedes, and Germans in the pay of Louis XIII, during the year 1637, and in that time, though we fought no general action, we were severely engaged in many skirmishes and minor affairs. This army, which occupied Alsace, was ably led by the Duke, who had suffered many family injuries from the house of Austria, and fearfully he avenged them in those wars, which devastated the land with such severity, that the brave old Duke of Lorraine and his fiery son, deprived of all but their swords and honour, were ere long reduced to mere private gentlemen, fighting for bread in the Imperial ranks, while the people of their duchy and of Alsace, were reduced to such misery, that, in this year 1637, after the capture of Brissac, the governor was compelled (as the French ‘ Mercury ’ records) to place guards upon the burial-places, to prevent the inhabitants, who were mad with hunger, tearing the dead from their graves and devouring them.

Two days after the fall of Zaberne, De Bitche blew up the tower of Phalsbourg, and crossed the Rhine, retiring into the duchy of Baden.

During my absence, the chevaliers of the Scottish Guard had suffered severely; their number was considerably below a

hundred now, and I missed many a stalwart form and familiar face from their ranks. Among those who were absent was Adam Scott, the hardy young Laird of Tushielaw, who usually rode on my left hand.

One night, several of us sat smoking and drinking in the garden of a little country-house of which we had taken possession, and there we were making merry talking of all the beautiful and amiable sinners of Paris, such as Ninon de l'Enclos, Marion de l'Orme, the Duchess de Bouillon, Mademoiselle de Chèvreuse, and others ; of that right royal glutton, Anne of Austria, who, in her anxiety still to please her lovers, had discovered the drugs by which Diana of Poictiers preserved her beauty in extreme old age ; a secret written by a sorcerer on the skin of a dead-born child, and long borne about the person of Catherine de Medici. I heard, too, that Clara d'Amboise, my voluptuous, intellectual, and political beauty, still reigned in the heart of Louis, with other gossip of equal interest to Parisian absentees.

During a pause in the conversation, I inquired about my comrade Tushielaw.

' Adam became sick of these fruitless and bootless wars, and went home to old Scotland,' said Patrick Gordon, gloomily ; for, on finding that a shower of brevets had come from Paris, and that his name was *not* among them, our old comrade had of late betaken himself to the soldier's consolation of grumbling ; ' and ere long, Blane, I shall go home too, for I am now seventy years old at least.'

' Seventy ! How, Marechal de Logis, I deemed you but fifty ?' said Dundrennan.

' True ; but I have served for twenty years in Denmark, Muscovy, and Brandenburg, and reckon these as forty ; yet I am only a poor Marechal de Logis of horse, while such boys as those painted fops De Toneins and Turenne, are camp-masters and knights of all the king's orders. However, my Lord Dundrennan, we have an auld Scottish proverb, which

saith, *a hauf egg is bet'er than a toom doup*, so I must e'en content me. When we campaigned ten years ago in Westphalia, a place where, as their own proverb says, you are sure to find bad quarters, worse rations, and long miles, I often heard the ‘half egg’ quoted by one who is now dead and gone—poor Hepburn—than whom no better soldier ever belted him with steel.’

This compliment to our dead leader was received by all with a silent bow of assent.

‘But Tushielaw was a wise man, and hath gone home four months ago to his old tower on the Border side,’ resumed Gordon; ‘I would that I had some such neuk to hang my sword in when I grow too old to carry it.’

‘Tushielaw,’ said Dundrennan, ‘was a brave and wild spirit. The last May-day we were in Paris, how merrily he, De Toneins, the Chevalier, and I danced with the grisettes round a Maypole cut from the Bois de Boulogne, and planted just outside the Porte St. Antoine. He was severely wounded in that affair we had at Mannheim—’

‘Ah—you fought that while I was cooling my heels in the Bastille.’

‘We were campaigning among the mountains of the Bergstrasse. It was in the month of December; the country was covered with snow, and our infantry were busy under Hepburn, de la Force, and de Maillé Breze in the fortification of Heidelberg and Mannheim. We were now in the land of brutal barons, beer-bloated philosophers, beggarly mightinesses, devils, ghosts, and doppelgangers.

‘Now this town of Mannheim, until we girt it by ramparts, was nothing more than a pretty village, guarded by the old castle of Rheinhausen; and our proceedings there, in stone and lime, were so highly resented by the Imperialists, that they never left us an hour in peace. Our boots were never off, and we slept in our frozen tents, with belts and harness on, till we were weary of our lives, and furious at the foe.

‘ One evening, when the sun was setting behind the mountains, and when the ice lay deep and strong upon the waters of the frozen Rhine and Neckar, a party of Austrian horse, led by young Count Pappenheim, with furred roquelaures over their black iron trappings, came suddenly upon our quarters, and gave us an *alerte*. On the right flank which, as you know, is always our post, the Marquis of Gordon ordered the trumpets to sound ‘ to horse ;’ and after some smart piqueering with our pistols, we fell on with our rapiers, at full gallop, and routed three hundred of Goetz’s dragoons, driving them across the valley of the Rhine in full and disastrous flight.

‘ Brave Tushielaw, being better mounted than any of us, and being used of old to border-pricking by Ettrick wood and Solway sands, led the van of this pursuit, till a few of the Imperialists turned upon him. Nothing daunted, he encountered them all. In three minutes he had slain, or at least unhorsed, four ; but a fifth proved a very evil-disposed fellow, who, with peculiar vindictiveness, ran him fairly through the body, and laid him at his horse’s heels, bleeding on the snow which whitened all the mountain-side.

‘ We stripped the warm furs off the dead dragoons, and carefully rolling up Tushielaw, brought him back with us to the camp, when the physician of the Marquis declared him unfit for the king’s service ; and so, after lingering among us for a month or two, he went home to Tushielaw to breathe once more of the breeze that comes down the heathery glen from those green hills that look on lovely Yarrow—*home*, where many a Scottish exile, now far away, would gladly be —home to his old tower, so famed in song and story, that stands in the solitude where Rankleburn joins the Ettrick.’

‘ So we shall see him no more ?’ said I.

Not in France, at least : but his story is not yet told,’ continued the Viscount. ‘ Poor Adam had been outlawed, and ever from Scotland mainly by the ex ns and influence

of William Douglas, Earl of March, who had conceived a hatred for him, and whose eldest daughter Isabel he had ventured to love; for he had frequently met her in Peebles at the play, where the football, the golf, the shooting for the silver arrow, and all our old Scottish manly games, yearly attract the flower of the Borderside.

‘ They had exchanged rings and locks of hair, and broken a piece of money between them, in the old superstitious fashion at Alhallowmass ; but the ring given to Isabel was ominously inscribed,—

‘ *The eye finds ;
The heart chooseth ;
The hand binds ;
But death looseth.*’

And these foreboding words were ever before her, on her lips and in her heart.

‘ Isabel Douglas had the black, sparkling eyes and dark eyebrows of her race ; but her skin was fair, and her tresses were like golden-coloured silk.’

‘ Were, say you ?’

‘ Listen. She was more than lovely, for I, who have seen her, know all this : and know that she possessed the *thirty* points of feminine beauty which Brantome declares we shall never meet with in one woman. But though she had the dark Douglas’ eyes and their black brows, she was feeble, gentle, and timid in spirit : so her father, knowing the daring and pride of Tushielaw, shut her up in his strong castle of Neidpath. There she was beyond the reach of the moss-trooping Scotts, whose hero, Adam, became involved in some vile border brawl or plot against the government ; and with the servile Lords of Council at Edinburgh, when a personage styling himself William Earl of March, Lord Douglas of Neidpath, Lyne, and Manorheid, opposed himself to simple Adam Scot, of Tushielaw, proscription and banishment were

sure to follow ; so our Border chieftain sailed to France, and took service in our Scottish Guard.

‘ In his absence I need scarcely relate to you how Isabel Douglas, still shut up in the gloomy tower of Neidpath, pined ; how the brilliance of her beauty faded ; how her eyes lost their lustre, and her lips their enchanting bloom ; and how she repeated, ever and anon, the ominous legend inscribed on her betrothal ring. No amusement roused her from the apathy and consumption into which she seemed to be fast hurrying. My lord of March, when he beheld Isabel, on his return from a year’s absence in London, was pleased to be mightily shocked and repentant. He removed her to his livelier mansion in the busy little burgh of Peebles, and endeavoured, but in vain, to lead her from her own thoughts and the secret sorrow that preyed upon her ; till, finding that every means failed, he at last consented to bring home Tushielaw, and wrote to Acheson, the Secretary of State at Edinburgh, who, by one dash of his pen, restored the estates of Scott, but failed to cure the worm that preyed upon the heart of the poor girl whom that year of sorrow in Neidpath Peel had destroyed.

‘ “ He will never return to me, father,” said she, and showed the Earl the legend on her ring, while her tears fell fast, for she had long been confined to bed, and was so weak and feeble that the heart of the old Earl was wrung on beholding the mischief he had wrought. At last there came tidings that Tushielaw had sailed from France, that he had landed in Scotland, and the day on which he was to pass through Peebles on his way to the forest was known.

‘ On *that day* there was an unusual bustle and commotion visible in and about the old castellated mansion of the Earl of March, which is sufficiently remarkable in the town by its curious turret that overhangs the street.

‘ At an early hour of the morning, poor Lady Isabel caused herself to be dressed and conveyed into a stone balcony, that

projected in front of the house ; and there, on a couch, she sat for hours, with her wan face, her black and now ghastly eyes fixed upon the vista of the sunlit thoroughfare, that she might be the first to see her lover as he rode up. At that time the town was lonely and dull ; few noises woke the echoes of its streets ; but so much had disease, anxiety, and love sharpened and rendered unnaturally acute the senses of this feeble girl, that she was able to detect the steps of her lover's horse at an incredible distance, and long before any such sound reached the ears of the anxious Earl, or her two sisters who attended her.

' A sudden flush crossed her cheek, her dark eyes sparkled with somewhat of their former beauty, and clasping the hands of her youngest sister, she exclaimed—

‘ “ He comes, Jeanie ! I hear his horse ; but, oh, it is far off yet ! ” Then, closing her eyes, she almost swooned. Yet the Earl and his pale daughters heard nothing, for at that moment Tushielaw was fully three miles distant, galloping along the highway that wound by hill and wood, and feeling his heart expand with anxiety and joy as he saw fair Teviotdale, with all its pastoral beauties, deepening in the summer sun.

‘ After landing at Eskmouth from a ship of the States-General, Tushielaw, still suffering from his wound received at Mannheim, became suddenly oppressed by one of those gloomy presentiments of approaching evil, which at times come unbidden to the Scottish mind, and so mysteriously affect it. He endeavoured to shake off this solemn oppression, but in vain. An uncontrollable conviction of the necessity of reaching home without delay made him ride fast and furiously ; and thus, without presenting himself at the capital to thank the servile placeman who had recalled him, he crossed the Lammermuirs and rode straight towards Peebles, which he entered about sunset.

• A half-stifled exclamation of joy burst from Isabel

Douglas when his tall figure, with cloak and plume, was seen to ride up the street at a rapid pace towards her father's house. Full of his own thoughts, and haunted by that presentiment of coming sorrow—all unaware that Isabel was in the town, or, if he saw her, all unprepared for the sad change in her appearance, the war-worn cavalier rode rapidly past, without seeming once to lift his eye to the stone balcony, where the poor trembling girl cast her hollow eyes and thin, wan hands towards him in an agony of joy that could never find utterance in words.

'Poor Isabel! Alas! though his soul was full of her image, Adam Scott beheld her not, and spurred out of sight without according a word, a glance, a smile of recognition! And *this* was the hour, the time, the meeting to which she had so long looked forward during the age of separation that had passed!

'Isabel gazed after his retiring figure in silence and speechless sorrow; and then, crushed by the sudden shock of his apparent heedlessness, she exclaimed, that in France he had forgotten her, and murmuring the legend on her ring, she threw up her white hands wildly towards heaven—there was a gush of blood from her lips, and she expired in the arms of the Earl and her sisters before they could bear her in from the balcony.

'She was interred among her ancestors in the burial vault of the ducal house of Queensberry, and a plate ^{to} her coffin—a plate to which her sorrowing lover pressed his lips again and again—bore the simple legend—

• The eye finds;
The heart chooseth;
The hand binds;
But death looseth! *

and since then,' concluded Dundrennan, 'we have heard no

* A copper plate, bearing this inscription, was recently found in a grave in Inveresk churchyard

more of our comrade, who, though at home in beautiful Ettrick forest, would, I doubt not, willingly be with us to-night; for the tower of Tushielaw, with the brawl of Rankleburn, and the sough of the old oaks that shade it, must be but a lonely place wherein to brood over the loss of a heart we have loved.'

CHAPTER LXII.

A MIDNIGHT MARCH.

THE evil fortune which had attended my comrade in his love affair affected my own spirit, and for several days after rejoining the Garde du Corps, I felt sad, lonely, and thoughtful. I was separated from Marie Louise, and though I could scarcely despair, what had I to give me hope? Yet a faint, a wild, and fantastic hope that did come at times, faded and grew fainter as day succeeded day.

She seemed ever before me, vividly and distinctly as I had seen her last; for in this girl's manner, in the clear full expression of her eye and the melody of her voice, there were an indescribable fascination; while her conversational powers were so full of unstudied grace, that, I verily believe, no man could speak with her, without feeling himself insensibly charmed and lured, he knew not why, to love her. But of this enough; lest the reader may suspect me of being less a soldier than a puling sentimental.

The recollection of Pappenheim was always sufficient to kindle my fury. At times, I had a gloomy desire to fall in battle; but not before I sent the thick-lipped Austrian lord to his last account, duly attended, if possible, by his friend De Bitche, as aide-de-camp; and these amiable desires seemed unexpectedly to be in a fair way of being gratified; for one evening the Marquis de Gordon, who had been overnight with the Duc de Lavalette, rode hurriedly to our quarters, and

as he passed me at the door of my billet, where I was lounging and enjoying a pipe of tobacco.

‘Now, Blane,’ said he, ‘your time for vengeance is at hand !’

‘How, Marquis?’

‘Count Pappenheim, with a thousand Walloon horsemen, all peasants, raised in the province of Luxembourg, is in the village of Lutzelstein ; and I am ordered to take a sufficient body of cavalry, and, if possible, cut him off. Attended by a troop of German and Spanish courtesans, clad in the spoil of plundered provinces, they have been making merry there for a week past.’

‘And the Count de Bitche?’

‘Is with him. This fellow who, as Shakespeare says of Talbot,

‘——— is so much feared abroad,
That with his name the mothers still their babes,’

has now a fair chance of ending his life under the same trees which saw his abduction of the Countess of Lutzelstein.’

‘And when do we march?’

‘To-night.’

‘Excellent !’

‘Our cuirassiers lead the way ; the dragoons of Brissac, under the Marquis de Toneins, who has just joined from Paris, are to follow.’

‘Bravo !’ I exclaimed, as a fiery joy swelled up in my heart.

‘At daybreak, we will be upon them ; and then let the Austrian and Lorrainer look well to sword and harness, for the Garde du Corps Ecossais never ride forth on a bootless errand !’

After supping with Home, Dundrennan, and a few others, on an omelette, with pickled herrings and saur-kraut, dressed with hog’s-lard, a horrible repast, prepared by my German

landlady, and washed down by a few bottles of Rhenish wine, we marched on our expedition, leaving Zaberne about midnight.

De Brissac's dragoons—still so called because they had been raised by the marechal of that name in 1600—with our troop of guardsmen, made up about nine hundred swords. The former were led by the Marquis de Toneins, formerly campmaster of the regiment de Normandie, who had succeeded the Duc de Bellegarde, slain before Phalsbourg ; and the Marquis of Gordon commanded the whole. We left the town at an easy pace, in light marching order, *i.e.*, unencumbered by forage, oats, or valises, but otherwise fully accoutred with all our arms.

The night was unusually serene ; the month was August ; and, as I looked back at Zaberne, I felt somewhat influenced by the beauty of the scenery and the silence of the hour. Around the city, the Sarre wound between woods of chestnut, and over it, on a lofty rock, stood a castle of the Bishops of Strasbourg, in the deep arched windows of which, red lights that twinkled, showed where Cardinal de Lavalette still held revel with some of his officers ; for that old fortress was his head-quarters.

While leaving the city by its only avenue, a steep and narrow path, hewn through the solid rock in the olden time, the French cavalry trumpets—sharp, shrill, and warlike—rang in the clear atmosphere, as they played a stirring march ; while the aspect of the successive sections of steel-trapped horsemen, as they defiled by threes from the ancient arch of the town-gate, and dipped into the deep path of echoing rock, with helmets, swords, and corslets glinting to the moon—their bridles and scabbards clanking—was sufficiently stirring and picturesque to raise even my sombre spirit from the thoughts on which it had brooded for some days past.

‘ There sleep the brave whom no earthly trumpet will ever

'rouse again,' said Sir Quentin Home to me, as we passed the long and gloomy mound which marked where we buried the dead.

'By this time to-morrow many of us may be still and cold, as they are to-night,' thought I.

As we penetrated into the mountains, the music ceased, and we rode in silence; even conversing in the ranks being forbidden.

The moon shed her clear cold light in a brilliant flood along the rocky vale. At the bottom of the latter ran a torrent towards the Rhine. It was bordered by groves of pale-green willow, the branches and tremulous leaves of which swept up the foam that gleamed on the chafed rocks and rushing water. In some places, olive-trees and flowering osiers mingled with them. Apart from the dull, monotonous tramp of nine hundred horse upon the road or sward, the silence was broken only by the occasional bark of a shepherd's dog, as its wakeful ear caught the distant sound; or the ominous bay of a wolf, prowling on the wooded peaks of the Vosges, and by some strange instinct scenting blood and slaughter on the midnight breeze already.

A ride of some miles brought us to a cascade, the white foam of which sparkled like a torrent of pearls as it plunged over the brow of a rock into a chasm. A single fairy-like rib of stone, forming an arch high above us, with its span clearly defined against the moon-lighted sky, gave access over this cascade to the small, but strong feudal castle of the Counts of Lutzelstein. This torrent flowed from a little lonely lake which bathed its walls, and was fed by the snowy rills of the Vosges.

Under Lieutenant Francis Ruthver, in this castle there was a garrison composed of eighty Scottish musketeers of Ramsay's regiment; but all was dark and sombre in tower and turret as we defiled through the valley below, and rode on, on our errand of death, unchallenged and unseen.

It was now that dark, cold hour which always precedes the dawn.

The Marquis ordered strict silence in the ranks, for we were about to debouch and form squadrons in the flat and open valley occupied by the bivouac of Pappenheim's cavalry.

'I have but one thought to-night,' said I to Dundrennan, whom I had made the confidant of my love affair, and in whose honour I had perfect reliance.

'To-night! You should rather say this morning. See, the moon grows pale already—and this thought?'

'Is to have Pappenheim killed or taken; for in either case Marie Louise will be freed from his obtrusive attentions.'

'If both fail?'

'Then I shall get myself killed.'

'Zounds! nay,' replied the Viscount; 'were I in your predicament, I should as soon think of hanging myself (like a certain Grecian blockhead when rebuked by Pythagoras) as of throwing away my life in battle. Life is a precious commodity, and we never know what a day may bring forth.'

'True,' said I.

'And the hand of Mademoiselle de Lorraine, deprived as her father is of land, fortune, rank, and authority, is no longer an object of gain to Pappenheim, or to any but such a Quixote as you.'

'But he is not the man to relinquish, without a struggle, a bride so beautiful and so nobly born.'

'We shall see.'

The order to form squadron, manœuvre, executed from the rear at a rapid trot, cut short further conversation. De Brissac's dragoons formed four squadrons of double troops: we formed *one*, and were in their front about two hundred paces. The country around us seemed open; the moon had sunk behind the hills. A grove of trees in the valley before

us, with a red light or two from a watchfire, marked the locality of the enemy, whose bivouac, disposition, and arrangements were explained to the Marquis, our leader, by a burgher of Zaberne, who acted as our guide ; and who, as he had purposely misled us, received his fee, and vanished ere the fray began ; for by this traitor the Counts Pappenheim and De Bitche had been duly informed of our intended attack, and had thus formed a counter-plan for cutting the whole of us off ; though we had fully believed that nine hundred regular French cavalry were fully equal to the task of dissipating a thousand Walloon militia.

CHAPTER LXIII.

THE AMBUSH.

PAPPENHEIM had brought up another body of at least a thousand horse, and placed them in a wood, on the extreme left of his bivouac, in front of which we found the original foe we had come to attack, the Walloons mounted and under arms, as we approached ; their dark figures being distinctly defined against the sky, which was becoming lighter every moment, day having now begun to dawn. As we advanced in squadrons and formed line, they threw forward a body of skirmishers ; we did the same, and there ensued a desultory firing of pistols and musketoons, by which several lives were lost, and, as usual in such cavalry encounters, a great quantity of ammunition was wasted ; for when troopers contend against troopers with fire-arms, not one shot in fifty takes effect. During this skirmish, which absorbed all our interest, we did not perceive that another body of horse had defiled from the wood on our left, and taken up a position *between* it and the river Sarre, covering the highway, and completely cutting off our retreat to Zaberne. This was a fine body of imperial

cuirassiers formed in line three deep, and led by Pappenheim. My amiable friend De Bitche commanded that corps of Walloons which held us in play while this artful and successful manœuvre had been executed. The moment they had taken up their ground, the Walloons recalled their skirmishers by sound of trumpet, preparatory to charging our line in double columns of squadrons, and *then* we discovered the trap into which we had fallen.

'By heavens!' said Dundrennan; 'this game will cost some of us our lives.'

'Mordieu!' added the Marquis de Toneins, galloping furiously up to our leader, 'M. le Marquis de Gordon, La valette has been misled; instead of one, we have at least two thousand here to meet our nine hundred men!'

'This comes of having troops commanded by cardinals and holiday generals,' replied Gordon, bitterly.

'Then what remains to be done?'

'There is nothing for us, but to retire.'

'In what order?' asked De Toneins, impetuously.

'Form your dragoons in squadrons again, Marquis; we will cut a passage through those fellows in our rear, and fall back on Zaberne.'

'A passage?'—

'Of course,' said Gordon, loftily; 'I will open the ball with the gentlemen of the Scottish Guard.'

'So be it then—Vive le Roi!' cried the young Marquis, as he gave the order, which was executed at full speed, and before his dragoons attained their new formation, we were already riding full at this new enemy.

We, the cuirassiers, presented a front of about forty files only, while the body we were to break through, had its flanks so far extended, that they could have overlapped twenty times our number. In the rear rank, I was Lord Dundrennan's covering file. The foe, a black and solid line of dragoons, after firing from their carbines a volley, by which we lost

several brave gentlemen (for their fire was given by a triple rank), got gradually into a trot, slinging their fire-arms and drawing their swords, as they advanced with all their trumpets sounding.

As the speed of our horses increased, so did our spirit fire up at the emergency and the danger ; and with the confidence we felt, of being equal to anything that men might essay, we became closer and closer, more firm and compact in our formation, and more furious in our speed. A wild enthusiasm seemed to spread from heart to heart along our little line ; and had even a coward been there, he must have caught a glow of courage from the glorious spirit around him.

‘ Close up—touch in--close up !’ cried old Patrick Gordon, when the hot fire thinned our ranks and, as the old Border ballad says,—

‘ Closing up on every side,
No slackness there was found
Though many a gallant gentleman
Lay gasping on the ground ’

Those who had the misfortune to fall, or be unhorsed, were doomed to immediate death ; for the rear squadrons of the Marquis de Toneins trampled everything flat upon the turf. Goring our horses, riding knee to knee at racing speed, with our teeth set and our swords uplifted we rushed upon the Austrians. The Chevalier Livingstone was shot through the left thigh, but kept his place till his boot was full of blood ; Patrick Gordon was wounded, and a ball took the plume from my helmet ; but the foe had not time to fire another shot, for, with a reckless shout we were upon them,—and the shock of our meeting was tremendous, forcing many of the chargers to reel back upon their haunches.

‘ Vive le Roi ! St. Andrew ! St. Andrew !’ cried the Marquis of Gordon ; and while we all echoed the battle-cry of the Garde du Corps Ecossais, we bore the enemy back—cutting,

hewing, slashing, and throwing horses and men to the earth. I felt many intended cuts and blows glide off my helmet, given I knew not by whom ; and in the crush, confusion, and fury of the conflict, I actually forgot all about Pappenheim for a time, and scarcely knew at whom to strike, but hewed away at random. Swords were gleaming and clashing on all sides of me ; and as they were whirled about, drops of blood were seen to fly through the air.

The Marquis of Gordon slew three men in succession ; Dundrennan was unhorsed in the melée, but shot a German trooper by his girdle-pistol, and mounted his horse, almost in the time I take to write it. Our old Marechal de Logis was hewing away on all sides with his enormous bilbo, keeping three or four horsemen in play at once, for we had now become broken, involved among the foe, and, while still spurring and pressing towards the Zaberne road, were engaged in a series of desperate personal combats, in which every gentleman of the Guard had at least two swords opposed to his single weapon. Poor Sir Quentin Home, though faint with loss of blood, had rid himself of two antagonists, when a third passed a sword fairly through his body. He uttered a wild cry, and, grasping the right hand of the Austrian to prevent him withdrawing the blade, he actually thrust the shell close up to the wound, and, rising in his stirrups with the last energies of despair and death, clove his destroyer through helmet and skull down to the moustache, and then threw his sword into the air, crying,—

‘ A Home ! a Home ! *True to the end !* ’ and fell dead from his horse, with his foeman above him. It was the motto of his house he had cried aloud, and with it closed his life and his name, for—rest him, God !—Sir Quentin was the last of his race.

Just as he sank from sight among the frightful débris of this brief and rapid conflict, I perceived before me a familiar face, flushed with excitement, and having a pair of eyes that

glared at me through the ribs of a triple-barred helmet. This was Wolfgang Count Pappenheim, and we were somewhat apart from the general mêlée. Not a word did we exchange; but there was a furious blow given, a fortunate parry made, and then a deadly thrust or two; after which we paused, surveying each other with the gloomy determination of two men who were never to part alive. By one lucky stroke I cut his reins, which placed him completely at my mercy, for both his pistols were empty; so, with an oath of rage, he hurled them at my head. I then levelled a pistol full in his face, saying,—

‘Yield, Count—yield, or I kill you!’

He smiled disdainfully, and, with a glance full of spite and fury, proffered his sword by the hilt. I stretched forth my hand to receive it, when suddenly the traitor turned the point upon me, and would have run me through the body had not the blade been struck up by Raynold Cheyne, who was at my side. He then passed his own sword twice through the body of Pappenheim, who fell forward on his horse’s neck, and, with blood gushing from his mouth, dropped dead beneath our horse’s feet.

‘Here ends our rivalry!’ thought I, as the Garde du Corps pressed on, and dashed furiously along the Zaberne road, leaving the Marquis de Toneins and his dragoons to pass through the deadly gap we had made in the ranks of the German reitres; but in achieving that service nearly twenty of my noble comrades left their bodies on the field.

Of the hundred Scottish cuirassiers who marched from Paris, there were now only sixty under the king’s standard. We had escaped the snare prepared for us, and slain Count Pappenheim; but while De Bitche was left alive, I deemed the work of that day but half done.

‘Raynold’s sword has done you a good service,’ said Dunderman, in a low voice, and with a grim smile, as he reloaded his pistols while we rode together at an easy trot along the

path of rock that led to Zaberne. Pappenheim is removed for ever from your path.'

'That matters little, Viscount,' said I, bitterly. 'She is beautiful and nobly born, and will always find those who will love her and beg her love. I would that she were still but the little soubrette I first knew her! Pappenheim was brave, but foully treacherous, as the last act of his life proved amply. Yet 'tis said this fellow really loved Marie Louise.'

'He—then, if so, and common rumour be believed, he never loved anything else.'

'Save his wine-pot.'

'True; but the Count is a German.'

I looked back to the mountains, where a silver haze was rising in the sunshine from the valley, where poor Quentin Home of Redden with so many of our comrades lay.

'Twenty of our brother soldiers have gone this morning to their last account,' said the Marquis of Gordon, with emotion. 'Alas! how this cursed soil of Alsace soaks up our Scottish blood!'

CHAPTER LXIV.

SEVERE operations in Alsace, which luckily left me little time for reflection, followed this cavalry affair. Picardy was invaded by twenty thousand horse and ten thousand foot, & Spaniards, led by Piccolomini and Prince Thomas of Savoy Hepburn's Scottish corps, now known as the Regiment de Douglas (their new colonel the Laird of Waughton was recently killed in Alsace), being commanded by Lord James, son of the first Marquis of Douglas, was withdrawn from the army to oppose them, and stopped their career on the banks of the Somme. I saw those gallant veterans no more; but the Scots of Ramsay and Leslie remained with us under the

Duke of Weimar. The Austrians, led by Count ~~Gallas~~, broke into Franche Compte, but were driven back by the Vicomte de Turenne, with the loss of five thousand men; while De la Force defeated the troops of Colleredo on the Alsatian side of the Rhine, with the loss of twelve hundred slain and taken.

Moreover, to increase the general confusion and complete the ruin of Duke Charles of Lorraine, about the close of this year his friend and patron the Emperor Ferdinand II. died suddenly; and by an unexpected movement of the troops of Lavalette, the fine palace at Nancy was retaken, sacked, stripped, and destroyed; all the court of Duke Charles were dispersed or taken, and where Marie Louise found shelter, whether in a German convent near the Rhine, or at Vienna, I knew not; as in our camp we heard but little of the war in which we were engaged.

I feared at times that she might connect me with the death of Pappenheim, and conceive a repugnance for me in consequence. I shrunk from this idea, and longed to acquaint her that however great was my enmity to the Count, he did not—even on that honourable field—perish by my hand, but by the sword of a friend, who had at once avenged me, and averted a crowning act of treachery.

The Duke of Weimar turned all the energies of his combined force of French, Scots, and Swedes, to drive the Imperialists from his newly-gifted dukedom of Alsace, and with this view he invaded all the strong places. Thus, while serving with the Garde du Corps, I was at the siege of Colmar, a large town situated on the western bank of a rapid stream; there we stormed the breach into which my old acquaintance M. Schreckhorn and his petardiers fired thrice a cartouche from a mortar, which each time made a frightful slaughter among the stormers; as these cartouches are wooden cases, three inches thick, bound with marline, and hold ten iron balls of a pound each, with about four hundred musket-

balls ; but in spite of all opposition we took the town in 1648, which was afterwards ceded to France by the treaty of Munster in 1648, when its walls were demolished by Louis XIV

We next assailed Hagenau, an imperial city which was defended by the Prince of Vaudemont. It is situated in the lower province, and was frequently the scene of contention, as it stands near the frontier, and was the seat of the Grand Bailiff of Alsace. While skirmishing with Colloredo's horse in the large forest near it six cuirassiers of the Garde du Corps were slain. One of these, Raynold Cheyne of Dundargle, was killed while rescuing the Chevalier Livingstone when fighting against great odds. On the night before this affair Cheyne dreamed that six soldiers bore him through a forest on their muskets ; and singular to say, after receiving his mortal wound, six of Ramsay's Scots carried him thus to the rear, and he expired in their hands. His dream thus became prophetic ; and we buried him with five others, who were all gallant Scottish gentlemen, under a large chestnut-tree near the bank of the Zorna. The defence of Hagenau was obstinate, and before surrendering the soldiers made a defence so resolute, ‘ that one of them,’ says Vaudemont, ‘ after expending his bullets, fired all his teeth at the enemy.’

The Prince effected his escape ; but after plundering the churches a gold crucifix worth three thousand pounds was sold by a Scots musketeer to a Jew for a rix-dollar and a bottle of brandy.

Then came the attack on Schlettstadt, a strong place, on one side protected by deep and swampy morasses, which, being full of willows and rushes, prevented all access. The defence was vigorous and the operations severe. Night after night we came back from the trenches to our tents as weary as if we had been rolling the stone of Sisyphus. As I seemed to exist without aim or purpose I was reckless of life, and exposed myself to so many dangers that my name was in the mouths of the whole army ; and strange to say, though I was

one of the stormers in three assaults, as the columns of the French ‘ Mercury ’ attest, and was honourably mentioned, too, in the despatches of the Marquis of Gordon, the Dukes of Weimar and Lavalette, I was never touched by sword or dagger, pike or bullet.

We captured Schleß-tadt in the night, by means of a flying bridge across the morass; old Colonel Ramsay, with eight hundred of his Scots, led the way; our Marechal de Logis, Dundrennan, the Chevalier Livingstone d’Angoulême, and half the cuirassiers of the Guard being mingled with them on foot. The Austrians poured such a shower of round shot, shell, and grape that twice as we came near we were forced to lie flat on our faces, while the iron hail screamed and hissed over us to tear up the morass beyond; and as this fire destroyed our bridge, we had no alternative but to proceed and conquer or be hacked to pieces.

Pressing on with a loud hurrah, while the very air seemed alive with shot of every kind, rockets, and fire balls, we plunged into the ditches, placed our échelles against the bastion, and sword in hand hewed a passage in. Even after that we had to fight every inch of the way along narrow streets, full of armed men, and swept by the fire of field-pieces, levelled over barricades of fallen houses and torn-up paving stones. In this defence a young knight of Malta distinguished himself so much that our soldiers declared he was visible in twelve places at once. But as the Duke de Lavalette said, ‘ The Scots fought here like Hectors and the Frenchmen fought like Scots—and the place was taken in an hour;’ then, like Colmar and Hagenau, it was garrisoned by troops who were afterwards blockaded by the Spaniards; but our capture was ultimately confirmed to France by the treaty of Westphalia.

On the day following the fall of Schleßstadt, while passing through a solitary street which was less encumbered by dead bodies, exploded bombs, cold shot, and fallen houses than other thoroughfares of the town, I met several groups of

brawling soldiers, and found an Imperial cavalier, whose sword-arm had been broken and bound by a scarf, feebly defending himself with his poniard against five or six drunken Switzers of Lavalette's corps. Drawing my sword I drove them aside, but not until I had given one a slash across the face which cooled his ardour and alarmed his comrades. I then gave my hand to the wounded gentleman, on whose black cuirass I perceived the gilded cross of Malta, and recognised the hero of the defence.

'I was wounded by your stormers during the assault, monsieur, and concealed myself in a house, hoping that I might escape: but was discovered by these Switzers who were in search of beer and plunder. As I have now only to surrender, I yield my sword without shame, since it is given to one of the Garde du Corps Fcossais.'

'I thank you for the compliment, monsieur; but beg of you to retain your sword, and allow me to have your wound attended to.'

'Do, for pity sake—the agony I suffer is unspeakable; so much so that I did not at first recognise you, M. Blane. Do you not remember me?'

I surveyed him attentively, and said,

'We have met in Paris, perhaps?'

'Nay, monsieur, have you forgotten the night you spent at the little chapel of St. Nicolas in the Wood, near Nanci, and the narrow escape you had from the ambush formed by Papenheim and De Bitche?—Do you remember who visited you there?'

'René, the foster-brother of Marie Louise?'

'René, the knight of Malta—yes—I am he.'

'Pardon me, my kind friend, for amid the confusion of such scenes as those of yesterday and to-day, together with your change of costume, and your paleness, it is not surprising that I did not at first recognise you. Nanci was sacked?'

'And the ducal palace destroyed.'

‘Where now is duke Charles?’

‘Alas! we know not.’

‘Vauclmont?’

‘A fugitive with the remains of his garrison on the German side of the Rhine’

‘And—and mademoiselle?’

‘Dear Marie Louise!’ exclaimed René, as his fine eyes filled with passionate enthusiasm, while his cheek grew, if possible, paler; ‘she is now Madame la Duchesse d’Alsace.’

It was now *my* turn to tremble and grow pale.

‘Pardon me, M. René; but did I hear you aright?’

‘Yes,’ said he, casting down his melancholy eyes; ‘she is now married—married within a week after Pappenheim, her betrothed and her abhorrence, was slain.’

‘Married!’ I reiterated in a whisper, for I could scarcely speak, ‘to whom?’

‘Monseigneur le Duc d’Alsace.’

‘This duke is but a boy—a child!’

‘True.’

‘But this union is impossible!’

‘Nothing of that kind is impossible to dukes and princes.’

‘I do not understand you,’ said I, considerably ruffled by a mixture of anger and agitation which I laboured in vain to conceal. ‘I remember a little boy named Duke of Alsace, who accompanied Charles IV in his procession through Nancy.’

‘With his coronet borne before him by a knight of Malta—myself. Well, that little boy is now the husband of Marie Louise,’ said he, with a sneer on his pale lip.

‘And this espousal—I gasped.

‘Is valid and true, though Louise is nearly *twenty* and her spouse is not yet *ten* years of age.’

Infamous and absurd!’

‘Absurd as it is cruel!’ added René, with deep emotion; ‘but such unions and such measures are justified by the crooked policy of princes and the stern pressure of war. This child is

hereditary Duke of Alsace and Lord of the nine Bailiwick's of Leichtenbourg, Baron of Landau and Lauterbourg, of Ferette and Aultkirk ; consequently to unite him more closely to the crushed house of Lorraine, duke Charles his guardian—sharp, short, and decisive in everything—arranged, and in three days executed the hitherto unconceived idea of espousing his daughter, in all the bloom of beauty and of womanhood, to a sickly little child.'

'And who performed this atrocious ceremony?' I asked, through my clenched teeth.

'The most reverend Father in God, the Lord Bishop of Strasbourg,' replied René, his dark eyes flashing with irony.

'And when did this happen?'

'About two months ago. I stood by the side of Marie Louise at this sacrifice—a most cruel and wicked sacrifice it was! Yet I would rather see her the bride of this harmless little boy, than of any living man,' continued René, with an emotion that too evidently was *not* caused by the pain of his wound. 'Yet what is it to me—this cross is my bride?'

'And how did Louise look?'

'Oh, lovelier and paler than ever, M. Blane!'

'Did she weep?' I asked, sternly.

'No—not a tear fell from her; she was pale as marble; and when her father—cold, stern, and proud—kissed her after the cruel ceremony, and whispered gaily (for I heard him), "Made-moiselle, your spouse will grow older, so remember the ancient rhyme,

"As your wedding-ring wears,
So will your cares,"

a sickly smile flitted over her wan face; and her child-husband who is attracted by her gentleness, and has for her all the love of a son for a mother, or of a brother for a pale and kind sad sister, clung to her robe as he left the altar by her side. confounded and perplexed by the strange ceremony in which he had borne a part so prominent; and more pleased evidentl

with a handsome falcon given to him by Vaudemont, than the beautiful bride just given him by God.'

'Do not say so!' I exclaimed, passionately.

'True—'tis almost blasphemous—by duke Charles then.

Here was ample food for thought and sorrow!

CHAPTER LXV.

APPOINTED CAPTAIN OF LUTZELSTEIN.

I BIT my lips, and strove to conceal from René the real emotions that stirred my soul ; but had not a sudden giddiness and dimness of sight, consequent to his wound and loss of blood, assailed him at that moment, he must have detected it. I gave him my arm, and, propped on the other side by his long rapier, he walked beside me in search of a surgeon. Chancing to meet the physician of the Marquis de Toneins, I had his wound skilfully dressed, and he was soon pronounced out of all danger. It was the barbarous custom of those wars, to exact ransoms from prisoners ; so, on finding himself well enough to walk about next day, René, who lived with me at the quarters of the Guard, said,

'I cannot pay you a ransom, M. Blané, for I possess nothing in this world but my sword and the cross of my order.'

'You are my special prisoner, dear René,' said I ; 'but never had the thought of ransom from you entered my mind. I shall obtain your release from Lavalette, with passports wherewith to cross the Rhine. You have been the faithful friend of Marie Louise—'

'Ah, yes—ever since the happy days at Nanci, where, as a boy and girl, we fed the golden fish in the fountains and played and shot together with the arbalest à jallet in the palace gardens.'

'Well ; continue to be her friend : for in such times as these,

with a child for her husband, she will have much need of an ally so faithful as you.'

René grew pale and cast down his eyes, while my own breast heaved responsive to the sigh that escaped him; for the love of René, like my own, seemed one of the many misplaced affections that, in spite of reason, will ever exist in the world. We parted; but as we knew not where Marie Louise was residing—whether secluded in her father's conquered dukedom, or on the German side of the Rhine—he crossed the latter, and joined the army of Count Gallas, under whose command, he, poor fellow! perished soon after at the siege of St. Jean de Losne.

Poor René! in his heart were united the tenderness of a woman with the faith of a dog and the valour of a lion.

I was sad for many days after parting with René, for our mutual love for Marie Louise, which neither avowed but both suspected, formed a tie and community of spirit between us. Yet the tidings he had given me were not calculated to rouse my spirit or make me happy. She was indeed lost to me for ever; and now I had nothing to look forward to but steadily dedicating myself to the desperate profession of a soldier of fortune. At times a burst of anger and anxiety seized me—anger at the facility which made her yield to a union so absurd, and anxiety lest this mere child D'Alsace might grow up a very Pappenheim in temper and morality; one who might lead a wife, ten years his senior, a life of anything but happiness and peace. Amid such speculations as these, Patrick Gordon, the Marechal de Logis, found me one evening, and summoned me to the presence of the Marquis de Gordon, who occupied the house of the Bailiff of Schlettstadt, a comfortable mansion, which he shared with Dundrennan and some others of the Guard.

I found him seated at table, with several letters and a good bottle of Rhenish before him.

'Blane,' said he, 'I have the happiness to acquaint you

that I have here letters from his Eminence Cardinal Richelieu, and from Sir Archibald Acheson of Glencairn, the Secretary of State in Scotland, announcing that your patrimonial estate of Blanerne is restored to you, together with the Balerie of Tungland Abbey, and the Captainry of Carlaverock as possessed by your father Sir Arthur, and that now you are free

to return and hang your sword under the roof where you first w the light; but where I may warn you it will not hang long; for a day is coming—and coming fast, too—when Scotland will need all her sons and all their swords to defend her.'

'When that day comes, Marquis, I shall not fail her,' said I

'Nor I,' added our white-headed Marechal de Logis, with a kindling eye.

'I give you my warmest thanks, dear Marquis, for these most welcome tidings.'

'What, of a probable war at home?'

'No; of the reversal of that most unjust and cruel act of proscription which was passed against me. So Madame la Comtesse d'Amboise did not forget me?'

'My dear fellow,' said the Marquis, laughing, 'Clara never forgets a lover so near the Rhine, and so far from the Bastille, if I may say so.'

'Marquis, I swear to you——'

'Do not swear, my friend,' continued the gay Gordon, 'for I will not even then believe you. The deuce! no woman would make such a fuss with a handsome young fellow as she did with you, and give him a Spanish barb worth six hundred crowns of the sun, without feeling something *more* than mere friendship for him. But I have nothing to do with all this. You are now free, Blane—free to leave the old Garde du Corps Ecossais of a thousand gallant memories—free to go home to Scotland, our dear fatherland, if you will.'

'Ah, Marquis, at present I have little desire to leave them and these exciting scenes, even for the pastoral home where my gallant father and his forefathers sleep.'

‘How! You have another love affair in hand. (A blush and a sigh.) I am right, then. The devil, Blane! you are very lucky to have all these pretty amusements at this distance from the Louvre. But as a bribe to detain you among us——’

‘My Lord Marquis, believe me, I require no bribe.’

‘I have obtained for you from the Cardinal Duke de La valette the captaincy of Lutzelstein; you remember that old tower which commands an important defile of the Vosges, two or three leagues from Phalsbourg; and if you accept——’

‘Accept, Marquis! I do so with gratitude; and if the enemy pass that way, Lavalette will find that his confidence has not been misplaced.’

‘Good. An escort of thirty of the dragoons De Brissac will be given to you, and you will have to depart this very evening to assume this new command.’

‘I shall be ready in an hour.’

‘Adieu, then, till we meet again.’

‘Farewell, my lord.’

And we parted. I left this brilliant, high-born, and high-spirited noble, little weening that I was never again to see either him, or my brave comrades of the Garde du Corps Ecossais!

CHAPTER LXVI.

WITH a mind full of chequered thoughts, I set out that evening for the scene of my new duties, duly furnished with all the papers given to me by the Marquis, and escorted by a party of Brissac’s dragoons. I left Schlettstadt behind, and took the way towards the wooded Vosges.

I thought of Marie Louise, and of all that fate and fortune had so studiously, sternly, and unremittingly raised between

us as barriers, after all the kindness, love, and adventure we had shared together ; and I vainly strove to dismiss her from my mind with a prayer that she might be happy.

Then I thought of my home and the letters just received from Scotland—letters by which I was free to return whenever I wearied of war, and the service of king Louis. Then came a glow of honest pride for the trust reposed in me, by this appointment to command a fortress, however small, and I resolved to fulfil that trust to the utmost.

Alas, for the vanity of human resolves ! *How* I obeyed king Louis, and *how* I fulfilled the trust of Lavalette, the sequel will show.

Lastly, I began to feel lonely in the new separation from the frank military spirits of the Guard, with whom, as brother Scotsmen (that endearing term) I had spent so many happy days, and with whom I had so many kindly associations and sympathies in common. I recalled those gallant men, whose manly forms were now mouldering in a soldier's grave—Sir Quentin Home of Ravendean, Raynold Cheyne of Dundargle, Sir Archibald of Heriotmuir, and Bruce of Blairhall, and pondered sadly on who might next be missing from the ranks, when again I saw the Garde du Corps : and so, full of thought, I rode on, increasing by every step the distance between my countrymen and me. With no sound near but the monotonous tramp of my French escort, we advanced towards the mountains of the Vosges, the darkness deepening, and the night casting its shadows over us.

The distance we had to ride, was, if I remember, only about twelve leagues ; but we were all ignorant of the country, and by unnecessary détours, added to our journey.

We soon passed through Andlau, a little town upon the margin of a stream which is so named, and which rolls from the Vosges laden with the spoil of the forest. The ancient castle of the Barons of Andlau, who held the town as a fief from the abbess of a convent there, was, like the convent

itself, garrisoned by a portion of our troops ; though this pious establishment was founded only for dames who could show their sixteen quarters of nobility, their abbess having the title of princess of the empire, with a seat among the Rhenish prelates, old Sir Andrew Gray of Broxmouth, colonel of Swedish infantry, had now quartered himself and his staff among them, and, seated in the chair of the reverend mother, drank her wine, collected her rents, and made himself quite at home.

A ten miles' ride took us through Bar, in a district clothed with vineyards, and literally flowing with milk and honey ; and next we came to Maltzheim, a town of the Bishops of Strasbourg, at the foot of the Vosges, ruined in after years by the Imperialists. Spurring on silently and rapidly, by the pale, chill light of the waning moon, I saw the tall grim tower of Phalsbourg, with all its memories so exciting to me, rising on its rock ; but like other strong places, it was now garrisoned by the soldiers of Louis XIII. I could see the turret wherein I had that deadly struggle with De Bitche ; I could see the arched gate, from which, with a desperate heart, I issued with the Austrian sortie ; the place where I had concealed myself and where the arquebussiers fired over me ; the dreadful spot where Schreckhorn bound me to the petard, and the cliff over which, in despair, I had flung myself into the river. At all these places I gave a dark and furious glance, and turning my back on them, urged my escort on, and dashed into a steep and dark defile, which led direct to the castle of the Counts Palatine of Lutzelstein.

We soon reached the tower by a zig-zag ascent, up which our horses wound with no little difficulty. The noise of our approach was concealed by the roar of the cascade which thundered over a wall of rock into the ravine below ; but on our appearance at the little stone bridge which spanned that tide of foam, we were immediately challenged by the sentinel ; a drum was beaten within, and the garrison, which was still

composed of a detachment of Ramsay's Scots, commanded by Lieutenant Ruthven, stood to their arms: and after due inquiries and explanations, the gates were opened, and about sunrise, I found myself duly installed Governor of Lutzelstein; and seated at table in the hall, discussing with Ruthven a breakfast of hot coffee, with pickled carp from the Rhine, with ham, eggs, and schnaps.

The Lieutenant, Francis Ruthven of the house of Redcastle, was an active and brave young officer, nephew of the Marshal Earl of Forth, and in after years colonel in the Dutch service, and Governor of Monell. He proved a very pleasant companion, and seemed glad of my arrival to relieve the monotony of his command in that lonely castle, among those wood-covered mountains that form the great barrier between France and the Empire, and which are usually capped with snow during half the year.

There a month stole tediously away, and save an occasional alarm, which gave me some anxiety, and beat us up in our shirts in the night, I had nothing to disturb the somewhat moody current of my thoughts, and I fear that my companion the lieutenant must have deemed me a very dull fellow, to be one of Gordon's cuirassiers.

'You have an estate,' said he to me, one day, 'while I have nought in this world but my sword; yet I am a jollier fellow than thee—how is this?'

'I know not,' said I, briefly.

'I am somewhat of a philosopher,' said he, smoothing his fine black moustache, 'and at college learned to deem a rich man in some respects a greater slave than a poor one.'

'How?'

'Was not Seneca right, when he termed a great wealth a great servitude?'

'Perhaps; yet believe me,' said I, with a smile, 'it is not the load of wealth that oppresses me.'

Lutzelstein was the scene of one of De Bitche's greatest

atrocities—the abduction of its widowed countess. It was a true old German castle, the abode of gloom and superstition ; moreover, it was, I know not how, associated with the memory of fair Agnes Sorel, the Lady of Beauty, the hapless mistress of Charles of France ; and on the wall of the room I occupied hung a tapestry said to be worked by her, and which represented one of those most authentic scenes which enrich the ancient history of France, to wit—King Pepin la Bref laying at the feet of his queen, Bertha the giantess, the head of a lion, which he had cut off by one blow of his sword, and with the ears of which a chubby brat, supposed to represent the future Charlemagne, was playing.

CHAPTER LXVII.

VISCOUNT DUNDRENNAN.

TOWARDS the latter end of October, when the brown or ruddy autumnal tints were stealing over the chestnut forests of the Vosges, a day of gloom had closed, and, as the night drew on, the red lurid light behind the mountains to the westward of Lutzelstein denoted a coming storm. There was a solemn stillness in the valley, and the hoarse brawl of the cascade beneath the castle-wall rang clearly on the dewy air. Smoking a Dutch pipe, I sat on the platform of the keep, immersed in reverie, and hoping a storm might come on, as a little variety, when the form of a horseman, far off, galloping through the defile below, caught my eye ; and as every stray passenger became an object of interest and source of speculation in that solitary place, I watched him as long as the light made him visible. I soon discerned that he was armed, and wore a helmet, and that he seemed to have come by the road which led towards the Rhine. He was well mounted, for he rode swiftly ; yet the light faded away, and the moon had risen amid black and flitting clouds, which afforded momentary

gleams of witchlike light, before he halted at the gate of Lutzelstein, and with a Scottish tongue replied to the challenge of the Scottish sentinel. Ruthven summoned me from the usual scene of my meditations, and on descending to the arched hall, wherein ten huge candles in sconces of tin flared like torches in the wind, I saw a tall and handsome cavalier, completely armed in the trappings of the Guard. He was Dundrennan, who turned and embraced me.

‘Viscount—you here?’ I exclaimed.

‘Why not?’ said he, throwing aside his sword and gloves; ‘am I not welcome to this new castle of king Louis?’

‘But, here without an escort?’

‘Tush! the whole country is clear of men now, and, unfortunately, of women too, which I find much more insupportable; but get me some wine if you have any, for I am sorely athirst by my long ride. By Jove! they have capital wine at Maltzheim, and you are certain to have some of the same stuff here.’

‘And you have come from——?’

‘Seltz, twenty-seven miles north of Strasbourg, where we are blocking up a body of fugitives under De Bitche, and pouring such a fire of shot and shell upon them, that those who die there will not deem the lower world quite so hot as people say.’

‘And to what do I owe the pleasure of seeing you?’

‘A despatch for you, M. le Gouverneur, and here it is; but while you con it over, Ruthven, like a good fellow, will assist me to get some of my iron shell off, for I have ridden eight good leagues since I mounted.’

I tore open the letter which he gave me, and found it to run as follows:

‘Trenches before Seltz,
10th October, 1637.

‘NOBLE COMRADE,

‘I have just ascertained that a coach containing certain Imperialists of high rank is proceeding from the neigh-

bourhood of Toul, towards the German frontier; and that, guided by a spy who is in our interest, it will, on the night of the 11th, pass through a defile of the Vosges, two miles north of your garrison. These Imperialists it behoves you to capture, and as you value the service of the most Christian King, to seize at all hazards. They have a slender escort, to avoid notice; but kill or capture them all, and my good Lord Dundrennan will return to me for further orders. Meantime, accept the assurance of my utmost esteem.

‘GORDON,

‘*Captain of the Garde du Corps Ecossais*

‘For Blane, of that Ilk,

‘Captain of Lutzelstein,

‘These.’

‘Well, Arthur, what is to be done?’ asked Dundrennan, stretching out his legs and draining a long horn of purple Rhenish, after scanning over the Marquis’s letter.

‘Obey.’

‘Of course; I never doubted that: so we shall have a little affair with sword and pistol.’

‘Who may those Imperialists be? Duke Charles, perhaps?’

‘Nay, he is supposed to be with Count Gallas beyond the Rhine.’

‘De Bitché probably?’

‘Wrong again: he is shut up by our troops in Seltz.’

‘This coach passes on the evening of the 11th.’

‘To-morrow.’

‘I will undertake this duty; and you, Dundrennan, will keep the castle for me in my absence.’

The Viscount demurred loudly against this arrangement; but in case the whole affair might be a decoy, a snare to lure off my garrison and recapture the castle of the Counts Palatine, he ultimately agreed to keep the place in my absence, and secure a retreat for me in case of my falling into an ambush.

CHAPTER LXVIII.

THE SURPRISE.

WITH ten of Brissac's dragoons, each having a Scottish musketeer *en croupe* behind him, I mounted and rode from Lutzelstein about sunset on the 11th, having previously, since mid-day, beset the defile by men disguised and armed, to warn me in case of being anticipated or foiled by an earlier passage of the expected vehicle.

The country around was so solitary that we reached the valley unseen, and I concealed my men in a wood on each side of the way, after throwing across it several large trees as a complete barrier to the coach passing without a desperate struggle on our part. The musketeers piled arms, five on each side of the way; the dragoons unbitted their horses, and, apart from all, I lay under a thick hazel bush, with my sword and pistols beside me, watching the far-stretching vista of the narrow defile, which was gradually growing darker and more gloomy as the light of the set-sun faded beyond the summits of the foliaged hills. I had seldom seen a place more silent or solemn than that sequestered dell as its shadows deepened in the night. It was the scene of our conflict with Pappenheim; and near me lay a human skull—a ghastly relic of that day's conflict; torn perhaps by wolves from the grave where the dead were buried, and left there to be bleached upon the soil, in which it was partly sunk. It was full of earth, and amid that earth some tiny flowerets bloomed. This sad relic of war and mortality imparted an additional gloom to the scene of our night-watch, and the lines of the Spanish poet, beginning *Bella Flor*, on a similar incident, occurred to me, and may be rendered thus:—

‘ Ah, beauteous flower ! where hast thou grown ?
How early is thy blight and bloom !
Thy scented blossoms scarce are blown,
When destined to this ghastly tomb !
Tis hard to pluck thee at thy birth ;
And sad to leave thee in this bed ;
To leave thee in thy native earth,
Is but to leave thee with the dead !’

Just as the moon, clear, white, and full, began to rise above a shoulder of the Vosges, one of my scouts came hurrying up to announce that a coach, escorted by a party of horsemen, had entered the defile and was approaching.

‘ By horsemen, you say : how many ?’
‘ I counted six ; three in front and three in rear.’
‘ Armed ?’
‘ Doubtless, monsieur. I saw the butts of their slung carbines gleam in the moonlight.’
‘ How far are they distant ?’
‘ About a mile.’
‘ Bravo, M. le Caporal ! get your dragoons on horseback. Musketeers, unpile arms, and look to your matches ; though I believe the troopers and I will save you all trouble in this matter.’

While the dragoons were biting their horses and mounting, and while the musketeers stood to their arms, the moon rose fully above the mountain ridge, pouring a clear, cold, steady light into the narrow vale, along which I could see certain dark and indistinct objects approaching ; and as they drew near, six horsemen became visible, escorting a large coach, which was drawn by four black horses, and had two valets behind it. The horsemen were accoutréed with holsters, swords, and carbines : three appeared to be gentlemen, having feathers in their hats. With my sword in one hand, and a cocked pistol in the other, I dashed forward at the head of my ten dragoons to bar the passage.

‘ Halt !’ I exclaimed : ‘ halt, and surrender !’

‘ In whose name?’ demanded a gentleman, drawing a pistol from his holster.

‘ In the name of Louis of France and Navarre.’

‘ Perish thou and he together!’ replied the other, firing his pistol full in my face; but, fortunately, I made my horse plunge, and so disturbed his aim that the ball whizzed harmlessly past me. ‘ Forward, messieurs,’ he added; ‘ break through these marauders!’

‘ Advance,’ I exclaimed; ‘ cut down all who resist.’

‘ France—France and Navarre!’ shouted my troopers, as they fell on with sword and pistol.

I heard the screams of women inside the huge lumbering coach, which was immediately stopped, for the traces were cut, the reins wrenched from the hands of the driver, and two of the horses were shot. A confused firing of pistols, and clashing of swords, with a vast display of kicking, spurring, and hallooing ensued in the moonlight; but in a trice the carriage was ours; three of the attendants were shot, and six, including the valets and driver were taken, dismounted, disarmed, and handed over to the musketeers, who freed the traces from the dead animals, and immediately put the wheels once more into motion; but now, in the direction of Lutzelstein.

All this uproar and loss of life ensued, and was over, almost in the time I have taken to narrate it.

The coach was very old-fashioned, being shaped like an enormous pie-dish, with an elliptical roof, surmounted by a coronet. It was so large that it might have passed for a small cottage on carved and gilded wheels. It was covered by heraldic and allegorical devices, stars, clouds, suns, moons, and elaborate gildings. It had three large glass windows on each side. Perceiving faces at them, and being anxious to learn who these important persons were, of whose progress towards the Rhine, Gordon had been apprised so far off as the trenches at Seltz, and for whose capture the lives of three

human beings had been sacrificed, I cantered forward to one of the windows, as the enormous conveyance rumbled up the steep, rocky road, and knocked on the pane with my ungloved hand, in token of amity. It was opened, and a female face, fair as beauty and pale as terror could make it, looked at me imploringly, with eyes whose blue seemed unnaturally bright in the moonbeams, which edged with light the thick masses of her golden hair; and the sentences of apology and inquiry which I had been framing died away on my lips when I recognised the soft features, and heard the beloved voice of—Marie Louise of Lorraine!

CHAPTER LXIX.

HUSBAND AND WIFE.

I CHECKED my horse, and stricken to the soul, like one who had been guilty of a great crime, shrank to the rear of all my party; nor did I again approach her, till we had surmounted the ascent to Lutzelstein; till the coach had rumbled over the castle bridge, and halted in the inner court, where the loud and hearty voice of Lord Dundrennan in warm congratulation, recalled me to the task I had to perform.

‘Blane,’ said he, ‘zounds! there are women in this huge tumbril. Whose better half have you abducted to-nig’it?’

‘Hush, for heaven’s sake, hush! ’tis Louise of Lorraine.

‘The Duchess D’Alsace—where?’

Torches were brought, and the doors of the carriage were opened. There sprang out a little boy clad in a rich coat of white satin, laced with gold, his fair hair tied with a blue ribbon. His air was haughty, but evinced alarm; for the brave child kept his hand on his tiny dagger. Then followed an old priest, in whom I immediately recognised Father Colville of the Scottish College at Pontamoussin, keeper of St. Lucy’s

reliques at St. Michel. Hat in hand I stood by the steps to assist Marie Louise; but disdaining my proffered courtesy, she sprang lightly to the ground. A young lady, her attendant, respectfully followed, with a countenance as expressive of terror, as that of her mistress indicated sorrow and anger.

‘Messieurs, to what place is this we have been brought?’ she asked.

‘Lutzelstein, a castle on the Vosges,’ I replied.

‘And *you* command here?’ she asked upbraidingly, as she bent her beautiful eyes upon me, with an expression which made my heart tremble.

‘I do—but mademoiselle—’

‘I am Madame la Duchesse d’Alsace!’

‘Pardon me—alas! I had forgotten it.’

‘Well, monsieur.’

‘I wish to explain—’

‘What?’

‘This most unpleasant affair,’ I urged.

‘Is it thus, M. Blane, that you designate a brutal brawl devised by yourself, for my capture? Oh Arthur! Arthur! there was a time when I hoped for better deeds from you.’

‘Marie Louise, I swear to you—’

‘Monsieur!’

‘Pardon me, and oh madame! do not pierce my heart with reproaches. Do not unheard condemn me to a life of sorrow and regret. I have acted to-night but in obedience to *this written order*, sent by the Marquis of Gordon from the trenches before Seltz, and delivered by Viscount Dundrennan, a gentleman of the Garde du Corps Ecossais.’

‘Well—we are your prisoners—my husband and I,’ said she, taking by the hand the child, who shrank close to her side as if for protection.

‘So this is the Duke d’Alsace?’ said I, regarding the poor urchin with a glance of a very mingled nature.

‘*My* husband, and as such to be respected,’ said Marie

Louise, blushing to her white temples, and by hauteur vainly endeavouring to veil the shame of this absurd avowal, which was made before so many persons.

‘ You are indeed prisoners,’ said I, sadly ; ‘ prisoners whom I dare not release.’

‘ Very well, M. Blane, enough of this. lead us to our apartments for to-night—farewell !’

‘ Adieu, madame,’ said I, bowing low, and while my heart seemed crushed or withered up within me, I gazed after her figure as it disappeared into the tower, where Lieutenant Ruthven escorted her and the female attendant to well-secured apartments, and placed sentinels at the doors and in the passages. The other prisoners, who proved to be Duke Charles’s masters of the horse and household, with a councillor of the chamber of accounts at Nanci, and two valets, we secured elsewhere in one chamber, where, as they bear no other part in this narrative, we shall politely bid them adieu.

‘ Come, Blane,’ said Dundrennan, proffering to me a huge cup of wine ; ‘ be a man for the honour of Galloway. Drain off this—then away to bed and sleep. To-morrow you will awake more placid and composed.’

‘ Sleep !’ I reiterated ; ‘ she has a husband, Dundrennan.’

‘ Bah !’ replied the wild young Lord ; ‘ in your place, I would soon teach her to forget that trifling circumstance.’

‘ For shame, my Lord.’

‘ Well, this capture of to-night is most unpleasantly important.’

‘ How, Viscount ?’

I must, in obedience to orders, ride back to Seltz, that the Duc de Lavalette may be duly informed of it.’

‘ True—I had forgotten,’ said I, biting my nether lip with anger, that any one, save myself, presumed to have an interest in the person of Marie Louise ; but in about an hour after this, with four of Brissac’s dragoons as an escort, Dundrennan left me for the French camp to report this seizure,

which was deemed so important, that he was next day despatched to Paris for the special orders of King Louis concerning the disposal of my prisoners.

Meanwhile let me relate how it fared with us at the solitary castle of Lutzelstein.

CHAPTER LXX.

A CATASTROPHE.

THREE days passed over, during which my fair prisoner remained in her apartments and I saw nothing of her. The little Duke, however, I met frequently, playing with the watchdog in the castle-yard, or with a hawk which was his favourite companion, and which, from the tower-head, he plumed and urged to fly at every feathered biped that came in view. He seemed a good-humoured, happy little boy, and handsome withal; but as he never approached me, and I—for my own reasons—cared not to cultivate his acquaintance, we never spoke, though he saluted me very courteously whenever we passed.

On the fourth day Marie Louise came to the bartizan with her attendant; and on perceiving that I studiously avoided her, she promenaded there daily, and consequently I daily witnessed the little boy-husband toying with her, and hanging about ‘his duchess,’ for whom he evinced all the love of a child for a mother or for an elder sister; for Marie Louise was an incarnation of all gentleness and sweetness. Moreover she was kind and even affectionate to the boy, affecting to take an interest in his prattle, and in the playthings he hastened from time to time to show her; and more than once, when surprising them engaged in a game of romps, or playing with shuttlecock and battledore on the terrace, I have seen

how Marie Louise grew deadly pale, and withdrew with a bow of sorrow and confusion.

Then I would reflect, that in ten years more this child would be a youth of twenty, perhaps strong, brave, and impassioned ; and that Louise would still be young and beautiful.

My position became insupportable ! I could not desert my command, nor retire from it until regularly relieved from head-quarters ; but in a transport of bitterness I wrote to the Marquis of Gordon and to the Duke de Lavalette, praying them to appoint another captain of Lutzelstein, and allow me to rejoin my comrades in the field. Daily I looked for a reply ; but weeks passed on, the brown autumnal woods were becoming bare and stripped ; but no horseman came from the Rhine—no letter from the trenches before Seltz.

Marie Louise—the ignes fatus, the hope of happier days, the star that had shone before me so long, the sole object of my thoughts—was living under my care, under the same roof with me ; but separated from her by the peculiarity of our relative positions, we might as well have had the wall of China between us.

One day I came somewhat abruptly upon her. She was seated thoughtfully on an angle of the terrace or rampart which surrounded the tower. Her white cheek rested on her whiter hand, and her eyes were fixed vacantly upon the foot of the valley which was traversed by the road that led towards Zaberne, and through which meandered a tributary of the Ell, and from its banks a haze was rising in the sunshine through the leafless woods. Her expression was mournful, yet from her eyes there fell no tears. Perhaps she felt the humiliation of being a captive in her own duchy of Alsace. She was dressed in a robe of light-blue Amboisienne, having sleeves trimmed with the richest white Mechlin lace—a dress that admirably became her pale complexion and bright golden hair, which was shaded by a beaver, and single ostrich feather white as snow. The little Duke was seated near her, absorbed

in fitting and preparing for sea a toy-ship which one of Ruthven's soldiers had made for him—a fatal gift as it afterwards proved; and, impelled by an irresistible desire to hear her speak, and once more meet her winning eye in kindness, I drew near. She bowed to me; and then I became deeply moved when perceiving that large tears began to roll in slow succession down her face.

'Madame,' said I, 'pardon me; but the sight of this silent grief fills me with compassion. Is there aught in which I can serve you?'

'Nothing; yet I thank you M. Blane,' was the gentle reply. 'M. le Duc,' she added, to the little boy, who, on my approach, had crept close to her side with childish curiosity. 'leave me, I have somewhat of importance to say to this gentleman—to M. le Chatelain, whom you know.'

'Then will M. le Chatelain allow me to sail my new sloop on the lake, and send a soldier to take care of me?'

'Certainly, if you wish it.'

'Oh! thank you M. le Chatelain.'

Anxious to be rid of him, I had consented, and he withdrew to float his mimic argosie in the mountain lake that rippled against the rampart below us.

'Hark you, M. le Duc,' said I, just as he lifted his little ship and was running away, 'take care of yourself.'

'Why, monsieur?'

'For many reasons; you love your Duchess, do you not?'

'Oh! yes, monsieur; are not her eyes so soft and gentle?'

'Alas, yes!'

'Why *alas?*' said the child with surprise, 'I assure you, M. le Gouverneur, she gives me twice as many sugarplums as ever my old nurse at Toul did, especially when she begs me not to tell any one that she has been weeping, for she weeps very often.'

'And this is your husband, M. e Louise?' said I, as the boy left us.

‘ Alas! poor child. He is very loveable, and reminds me much of what my foster-brother, René, and Vaudemont, were at his age; for this I love him.’

‘ Unhappy girl!’

‘ I am indeed a most unhappy girl; yet less so than if fate had united me to Pappenheim.’

‘ But this boy will be a man in time to come.’

‘ Ere that comes to pass I shall be—’

‘ Where?’ ‘ In my grave, beside my mother.’

Her voice stirred all my old love within me, and her grief became painfully sympathetic. I took her soft velvet hands in mine. She allowed me to retain them, and, fortunately, where we stood no eye could overlook us. I was about to yield to the intoxication of the moment, and press her to my breast, when a step rang on the gravel, and the little Duke came running back in high glee to announce that his ‘ ship was afloat, and that we could see her by simply looking over the parapet.’

‘ Ah! M. le Chatelain,’ said he, joyously, ‘ I see you are very fond of talking to Madame la Duchesse. So am I, for since I lost my mother, no lady has been so kind to me as dear Louise. I am her husband, to be sure, but you see, monsieur, that I am still a very little boy. Do *you* love my wife? I am sure that *I* do; but she weeps often, and that makes me sad. I wish monsieur could cure her of weeping. She kisses me at night, when the master of the household puts me to bed in yonder lonely turret; but I always steal to *her* room in the morning, though I am sure to find her weeping.’

‘ You perceive, Arthur, that even this child observes my misery.’

I pressed her hands, and felt almost stifled by her emotions and my own.

‘ See, madame! see, M. le Chatelain, how bravely my ship crosses the lake!’ exclaimed the little Duke, while clapping his hands in boyish glee he left us, and rushed again to the postern gate, which opened close to the water.

‘Leave me now, Arthur; what more could you say to me now, now when—all is over?’

‘My God! I know not unless—’ ‘Unless what?’

‘That I have the misfortune to be one of those, who, if noticed by princesses, are seldom happy enough to be long remembered by them.’

‘Ah! why did you come near me again—and with these reproaches, too?’

‘We cannot at all times control our hearts; and though mine is all but broken, I cannot remain separate from her who wrought me all this suffering and calamity.’

‘Do you forgive me?’ she sobbed.

‘Forgive you—Oh, Marie Louise!’

‘Alas, Arthur—you must—you would, indeed, if you knew all I have undergone.’

To resist the impulse that inspired us both to indulge in one mute embrace, was impossible; but how terribly was it interrupted!

At that moment there was a piercing cry from the rocks below. I sprang upon the parapet, and saw the little Duke d’Alsace struggling wildly with the waters of the lake into which he had fallen from a point of rock, when stooping over it, to land that fatal toy, his ship. The soldier who had accompanied him was hallooing vehemently for assistance, and a loud uproar of voices shook the whole castle. The Duke was fully three hundred yards from me, and I stood gazing at him, overwhelmed by many terrible emotions.

If that child was drowned, Marie Louise would be **FREE**; but if I permitted him to perish without a struggle, then would I be guilty of a wicked murder, and a dereliction of duty. Without longer hesitation I flung my sword, belt, and pourpoint upon the terrace, and springing over the rampart, to which Marie Louise was clinging, and looking paler than white marble, I plunged headlong into the lake, and on rising to the surface, struck out boldly for the drowning boy, who had now risen, and sunk thrice.

'Oh, yours is indeed a noble heart !' I heard Marie Louise cry from the wall above me, while, half blinded and suffocated by emotion and exertion, I swam with all my force. I saw another person spring into the lake with a loud halloo ; but knew not, until afterwards, that he was Frank Ruthven, of Ramsay's Musketeers, who, being a swimmer more able than I, first reached the spot where the boy had now sunk, and it was fatally near the brink of the cascade, over which, despite all our efforts, the poor victim was swept and drowned.

CHAPTER LXXI.

THE VISCOUNT'S ADVICE.

SUCCEEDING events passed with such rapidity, that I may be pardoned in noting them briefly.

Next day, my soldiers found the body of the Duke in the stream below the tower, and bore it into Lutzelstein.

Marie Louise, being naturally warm-hearted and affectionate, wept for the poor boy's death, and wreathed a chaplet of white roses for his head when we confined him ; and with every honour that the emergencies of the time, and the slender nature of my garrison would admit, we buried him at a little chapel of St. Nicolas that stood on the mountains, about three miles distant ; and there Father Colville said all the necessary prayers.

During three or four days after the funeral, I left Marie Louise in undisturbed seclusion, to recover her composure, after the excitement consequent to this (in conventional phraseology) fatal event, which set her *free* ; and which, I fear me, I was too selfish to wish undone ; though salving my conscience by the reflection that I had left nothing unattempted to save the child who had perished ; and from my soul I thanked heaven, that in the first natural impulse of generosity and humanity, I had plunged into the lake, and been the first to attempt his rescue.

Without other emotion than tenderness and respect, I had beheld Marie Louise kiss the white brow of the dead child—her spouse—as the poor little fellow lay in the rough coffin my soldiers had fashioned for him.

As captain of Lutzelstein I acted chief mourner.

So ended this tragedy!

I was now, however, less anxious for the arrival of my successor, and hoped that my application might be overlooked by the Marquis, or rejected by Lavalette. So true it is, that we never know the events a day may bring forth!

My new wishes in the matter proved futile; for one morning I was awakened at daybreak, by my chamber-door being noisily opened, and the tall form of Dundrennan, in the cuirass and helmet of the Garde du Corps Eeossais, stood before me. The words of welcome I would have spoken, died away on my lips, unuttered; for I knew that his arrival announced an indefinite separation from Marie Louise.

‘What,’ said he, ‘still a-bed, as if you were in Paris?’

‘I have so little to care for here, at Lutzelstein.’

‘How, so little say you, when your fair friend—a veritable princess—is here, and a widow too?’

I shrugged my shoulders.

‘How French you have become,’ said the jovial Viscount; ‘but say, has not your suit prospered since the drowning of hei juvenile spouse?’

‘Hush!’ said I; ‘do not speak thus, for heaven’s sake!’

‘Devil take me, if I understand thee, Arthur Blane!’ grumbled the Viscount, biting his dark moustache; ‘but rouse thee, man, truss thy points, and let us to breakfast. I have had a long ride overnight from Seltz, which we captured at our swords’ point three days ago. Old Patrick Goroun lost an ear by a pistol-shot, in the assault; but the cuirassiers expect you anon; for it seems that I am to be your successor, for a little time, in this detestable place. Ouf! But Madame la Duchesse d’Alsace—by Jove! it will be awkward for me

o have such a charming prisoner in my care—one who is another's lady love, too !'

' Dundrennan, your gabble tortures me,' said I, springing from bed, and proceeding hurriedly to dress.

' I had a narrow escape in the assault, for Ramsay's Scots blew up the powder-magazine—a pleasant little piece of excitement, which cost twenty of them their lives. But how have you wearied of your captaincie ?'

' Because I am weary of my life.'

' With a prisoner so fair in ward—a widow, a virgin widow too—lovely in her weeds and tears !'

' Dundrennan, I will kill you !'

' No, you will not ; but you shall listen to me and to reason.'

' Reason from *you*, Viscount ?'

' Yes,' said he, becoming grave ; ' is your passion real ?'

' Alas, too real !'

' Then conquer it, if it cannot prosper.'

' Folly, Viscount—a real passion cannot be conquered ; a fanciful one can alone be stifled.'

' This love affair has been a misfortune to you both, Arthur.'

' True, Viscount ; but we cannot control our hearts.'

' We—then the lady fully responds ?'

' Oh, yes—as much as lover could desire.'

' You are riddles ! She must be won by a coup-de-main, or she will soon be taken from you, and then you will be compelled to forget her.'

' Impossible !' said I, buckling my sword-belt over my pourpoint.

' So you think ; but nothing is impossible to time. Learn to love her at a distance ; her image will then fade gradually, while another may soon supplant it ; for the human heart cannot remain long vacant.'

I shook my head sorrowfully.

' Well—I have but one other advice to offer.'

' And that is—'

'To carry her off while there is yet time. With such a prize to win, and such a love already won, with swords enough to back me, I would bear her off before the assembled kings of Europe.'

'You counsel boldly, Dundrennan.'

'Because I counsel wisely. Women will forgive everything that has love for an excuse. Let us be bold in love as in war. A little modest assurance in the flowery field of Venus will carry one on, when modest merit fails to win the day.'

'You talk like the ruffs and gallants of the Boulevards. But ah, Viscount! you do not know Marie Louise. Every thought of hers is full of innocence—every action full of charm and grace.'

'Of course,' chimed Dundrennan, stroking his moustache with a very provoking air; but at that moment Frank Ruthven appeared to announce that four strange horsemen, richly dressed, well armed and mounted, were at the gate of the tower, and imperiously demanding admittance.

'Which way came they?' I asked, assuming my sword and mantle.

'By the road from Lorraine.'

'They have come from Paris,' said Dundrennan.

'Probably,' said I, and a gloomy foreboding of their mission sank like a cloud over my heart.

CHAPTER LXXII.

THE KING'S MANDATE.

THESE four horsemen were from Paris direct, and proved to be M. de Brissac, a Commander of Notre Dame de Mont Carmel, and two grey musketeers, gentlemen in the suite of Cardinal Richelieu, who came as commissioners, with a warrant to convey Marie Louise of Lorraine, daughter of Duke Charles IV., and her husband the Duke d'Alsace, direct, under suit

able escort, to the capital, where they were to be delivered to the captain of the *Bastille* !

As I read over the warrant and with a sickening heart handed it to Dundrennan, to whom, as new chatelain of Lutzelstein, it was more immediately addressed, I felt a strong desire to pass my sword in succession through the bodies of M. De Brissac, the unfortunate Knight of Our Lady of Mont Carmel, and their two companions.

‘Dundrennan,’ I whispered, ‘what shall we do?’

‘Receive the King’s mandate with respect in the first place, and promise implicit obedience in the second ; but whether we shall see fit to fulfil that promise, is a matter for future consideration. Gentlemen,’ said he, turning to the four visitors, ‘I am Viscount Dundrennan, a gentleman of the Garde du Corps Ecossais, now captain of this tower, and shall see that our fair prisoner is duly apprised of your arrival, and of the King’s kind views concerning her and the little Duke, who is now happily beyond the reach even of Cardinal Richelieu. When do you propose returning towards Paris?’

‘To-night, if possible,’ said De Brissac.

‘Pardieu ! my dear De Brissac,’ exclaimed the knight of Mont Carmel, ‘don’t speak yet of returning, before we have almost seated ourselves.’

‘Of course, gentlemen, you will breakfast with us?’

‘With pleasure. I have tasted nothing since we supped at a wayside auberge yesterday, where we had to cook the fowls for ourselves.’

‘And you pronounced them delicious, M. le Chevalier, and gave all the heads and legs to the aubergiste, with your customary liberality?’

‘De Brissac !’ I muttered, ‘this caterer for the Bastille, is, like De Bitche, my evil genius.’

‘Hush !’ said Dundrennan ; ‘any display of hostility will spoil the plan of my intended campaign. I mean you to play little game with these four commissioners, as the warrant of Louis, “by God’s grace, King of France and Navarre,”

styles them. So, gentlemen, what is the latest news from the vicinity of Notre Dame?"

"The same as ever," replied the commander of Mont Carmel; "the star of La Comtesse d'Amboise is still in the ascendant."

"King Louis still reigns in the bosoms of his subjects—the female portion thereof especially," said De Brissac.

"For shame, De Brissac; this is "lese Majesty."

"Nay, 'tis a melancholy truism."

"And Monseigneur le Cardinal still worships at the shrine of Marion de l'Orme?" said I, with a spiteful glance at De Brissac.

"Oh yes, M. Blane!" said he, with a covert smile; "and has employed M. Poussin to paint two classic subjects from ancient history for her boudoir."

"The sorrows of the chaste Lucretia, perhaps?"

"No: Nero, after his first shave, presenting his soapsuds to thundering Jove in the Capitol; and Caligula making love to the moon, and beseeching her to enter his bed."

There was an undefinable something in the jaunty air and jocular tone of De Brissac that irritated me, I scarcely knew why; so I said—"You and I had a little affair left unsettled in Paris, M. de Brissac, if I remember rightly."

"I was just about to recall it to your memory, and regret that you have but anticipated me. You consider me still your debtor?" "I do," was the haughty reply.

"And wish to fight with me?" "Yes," I replied, heedless of a twitch Dundrennan gave my cloak.

"Then I regret, M. Blane, that I must decline the honour of crossing swords with you." "Zounds!—decline?"

"For a little time yet." "Indeed!—wherefore?"

"Pardieu—for two sufficient reasons." "Name them."

"If I killed you, people in Paris would say I had done so because you demurred to let king Louis have the daughter of Duke Charles. If you killed me they would say it was done because I came to demand her, or that you resented being omitted in this pressing invitation to share the hospitality of the Bastille; moreover, they will put unpleasant

constructions on the circumstance of the duke d'Alsace being drowned while in *your* care. They are very provoking, these Parisians, so let our little quarrel remain open until you return to the Louvre, when I will be delighted to afford you an opportunity of going comfortably home upon a door or shutter from the Boulevards or the Bois d' Boulogne.'

'Agreed,' said I, for one part of his remarks made me grow pale with anxiety; 'but will you please to inform me what interest these devilish gossips of Paris can conceive *me* to have in notwithstanding the King's orders concerning Marie Louise of Lorraine?'

'My dear young friend,' said De Brissac, laughing, as he seated himself at table, 'your residence here among these wooded mountains is very secluded; but, believe me, that Cardinal Richelieu has more spies in France and Germany than Father du Tremblay, that devil of a Capuchin.'

I retired, and was followed by Dundrennan, who said to me, gravely—

'Be silent and be wary, for that you are suspected at Paris is but too evident.'

I threw myself upon a fauteuil to unravel and consider the difficulties of my new position, while the Viscount visited the poor victim of all these wars and politics to announce her intended removal to Paris and to the Bastille. Her first emotions were anger and alarm, then grief and shame at the idea of being immured in that atrocious prison; and she burst into a flood of tears.

'I have but my old advice to offer,' said Dundrennan, as he rejoined me; 'marry her, and trust the sequel to Providence and the heels of a good horse.'

'So be it, then. Viscount; I love her too dearly to surrender her again. I have twice lost her, I may say—once I deemed for ever. You alone know this secret, Dundrennan, and must befriend us.'

'You heard De Brissac's mysterious hints about Richelieu and the gossips of Paris.'

'True!' said I, stamping my foot; 'bear with me like a friend—advise me like a brother.'

'My advice is already given—marry and levant from Lutzelstein, leaving De Brissac to return to Paris from a bootless errand. Twenty leagues from Seltz, on the Baden side of the Rhine, my cousin, Marmaduke Maxwell, commands an imperial garrison at Lieben-Zell; I will give you letters to him. Once with him you will be safe, for he will put you and your bride on the way to Flanders, from the coast of which you can easily obtain shipping for Scotland.'

'And if once again I place my foot on the Galloway hills, I may defy alike the Emperor and Duke Charles. I have run enough about the world, and seen enough of bloodshed. Yes, yes,' I added, with a glow of joy, 'I will go home once more to the glen where my forefathers sleep under the shadow of the old village spire.'

While Dundrennan went in search of Father Colville to talk with him on the crisis of our affairs—for as a Scottish peer he had great influence with the priest—I repaired, with an anxious heart, to the presence of Marie Louise.

CHAPTER LXXII.

HOW WE OBEYED IT.

I FOUND her pale and in tears, with a face that too plainly told of present suffering and of past sorrow. She was dressed in a dark robe, having wide loose sleeves trimmed with silver oraid and black wolf's fur, which contrasted finely with the whiteness of her delicate skin. She came hurriedly towards me, and putting both her soft hands in mine permitted me to kiss them and place myself beside her. After a sad pause,—

'Viscount Dundrennan has just left me,' said she.

'Then you know all?'

'All that Richelieu and King Louis have in store for me—yes. Imprisonment in the Bastille until I shall consent, perhaps, to wed one of their creatures, or until my father, to

procure my release, consents to a written surrender of that dukedom which has already been rent from him by force of arms.'

Her tears flowed fast; and I pressed her hand to my heart, saying,—

'Alas! Marie Louise, that you should weep thus—you who have been born to rank and splendour.'

'Nay—I have been born to unhappiness—born of a race that is fated to fall.'

'Louise, listen to me,' said I, trembling for the success of what I was about to propose; but yielding to the dangerous predicament in which we stood; trusting to her love for me, and borne away by my passion for her, heaven lent me eloquence, and the little I said when urging her to marry, and with me to seek safety in flight, was said well and delicately; but all that interview seemed like a dream to me an hour after.

She grew pale as snow, and trembled in her turn; but my words had not been heard unheeded.

'Much as I love you, Arthur, and that I *do* love you, you believe and know, there is a something in all this proceeding at which my pride revolts.'

She paused, and my heart sunk; but suddenly she kissed me; her eyes beamed with a beautiful expression, and taking my hands in hers, she said,—

'You would have married me when you believed me to be but a poor soubrette, dear Arthur—you, a gentleman of family, a cuirassier of the proud Garde du Corps Ecossais; I have not forgotten *that*, or that to be ungenerous would be unlike the daughter of Duke Charles. A pure passion, a true love, should ever be ready to make every temporal sacrifice for the object of its regard; but this is no sacrifice that you ask me—to fly with you to your country—this Scotland of which we hear so much in song and war. I ask you to give me a protector; to save me from the Bastille, from Richelieu, and from Louis—from becoming again the wedded victim of a sinking state.'

‘Heaven bless you, beloved Louise! This, then, casts the die and decides me. No man can serve two masters.’

‘What mean you, Arthur?’

‘I cannot obey love and Louis XIII. at the same time.’

‘What will the world say, on hearing that after being but three weeks a widow I wedded again?’

‘It will say that your so-called husband was but a child; that you were made the sport of circumstances and the tool of calculating politicians, who snared you into so preposterous an espousal.’

‘Perhaps so,’ she sobbed upon my breast; ‘but my father——’ Is a fugitive.’

‘My poor father! so brave, so true, and tender! I shall never see his kind face again; but surely, to be the wife of a well-tried soldier——’

‘Will be no disgrace in the eyes of Charles of Lorraine,’ I added.

‘Neither Louis nor my father shall have it in their power to make me the wife of a man I cannot love. My family are exiled; Lorraine is now but a name—a French province; its dukedom is a shadow. We are equal; and your country and home, dear Arthur, shall henceforth be mine!’

After this I need scarcely add more; but we had De Brissac and his three companions to baffle, the Rhine to cross, Flanders to traverse, and the sea to pass before we saw my father’s tower amid the wilds of Glenkens; and many a bold and daring adventure we had on the journey—adventures sufficient to fill ten such volumes as this.

Marie Louise was a true woman; thus, when I appealed to her love and her generosity cold reason gave way, and she agreed to unite her fortunes with me.

Love on one hand, with the Bastille on the other, were powerful arguments; and if any more were required Father Colville of the Scottish College of Pontamoussin supplied them; for he had great influence with her, and was warmly

disposed towards me. The priest knew that he owed perhaps too much to Duke Charles to free him from some blame in wedding his daughter to me without a special permission ; but considering that by doing so he advanced, as he said in his own quaint way, ‘the honour, comfort, and commoditie of a Scottish gentleman,’ he had no qualms in the matter, spiritual or temporal, and at once agreed to bless the indissoluble knot.

Brevity is necessary now, for my volume is already full.

We were married that evening in the little oratory of Lutzelstein, at the door of which stood Frank Ruthven, with his sword drawn, to prevent espionage or interruption ; and the sole witnesses were Richard Maxwell Viscount of Dundrennan, and the attendant of Marie Louise, a young lady of the province, named Anna Mulhausen, daughter of the Grand Bailiff of Alsace, a flaxen-haired little beauty who loved her mistress well, and whom we easily bound to solemn secrecy.

Our next achievement was to baffle the acuteness of M. de Brissac, who proposed to leave with his prisoner when the moon rose, that he might travel as far as possible unseen. It was resolved, that as we could not leave this solitary tower unknown to him, we should by a ruse elude his vigilance. Thus : he was to be permitted to hand Marie Louise into the coach on one side of the dark and narrow archway of the out-works, when she would leave it in a moment and unseen, by the other. My heart beat quickly and painfully as the sunset deepened on the mountains ; as the moon arose, the night drew on and the moment of escape approached when Marie Louise and I would be together—together and cast upon the world never in life to be separated more ! I carefully examined the two horses Dundrennan kept for us at the back postern of the tower ; I inspected every buckle of their bridles and girths ; I armed myself carefully, like one about to engage in a deadly struggle, and double-charged my girdle and holster pistols.

The rumble of wheels in the court-yard, announced that the old-fashioned coach in which we had captured Marie Louise was being prepared for her again ; and the glare of torches

on the walls and grated windows of the tower, with the clatter of hoofs, informed me that the horses of De Brissac, of the Chevalier of Notre Dame de Mont Carmel, and of the two grey mousquetaires were ready.

Ah, what a breathless and exciting time it was!

Luckily the moon became veiled in clouds, and Dundrennan ordered all the torches to be extinguished, saying, with wink to me, that ‘the vaults were full of live bombs and gunpowder.’

I felt almost suffocated with excitement and apprehension, as Marie Louise, in her travelling dress, came forth; and instinctively I stepped towards her.

‘Keep back, Blane,’ whispered Dundrennan; ‘your excitement will spoil all—leave me to officiate.’

Drawn by four horses, the large old-fashioned coach stood in the dark and narrow archway of the tower; and De Brissac, an old hand in all manner of business connected with arrests and the Bastille, said, with the greatest suavity of tone and manner,

‘Pardon me, madame!’ and lifted her veil to assure himself that this lady was indeed his prisoner. The blue eyes, the pale face, and golden hair were seen for a moment, and a cry almost escaped me as with one hand he assisted her into the coach, and while carefully closing the door, with the other gave to Dundrennan, as captain of Lutzelstein, a full receipt for ‘the person of Marie Louise of Lorraine;’ and I heard the Viscount laugh as he placed it in his girdle, and walked round to the other door of the carriage, which he had purposely left open; and then my heart stood still, for one false or unanticipated movement would spoil all! M. De Brissac said—

‘Adieu, for to-night, madame! after this we shall disturb you no more until morning.’

Placing a foot in his stirrup he mounted, and ordered the coach to be driven off. At the same moment I lifted Marie Louise out by the opposite door, which Dundrennan closed as

I led her away in the darkness, which enabled this manœuvre to be as skilfully executed as it was wisely prepared ; and then the enormous vehicle went lumbering *empty* along the bridge of the cascade and down the valley, carefully guarded by De Brissac, the Chevalier of Mont Carmel, and the two mousquetaires.

'I have the quittance of M. de Brissac ; I am safe—the fool ! the egregious fool !' said Dundrennan, while, laughing, he ordered the gates to be shut and the bridge wound up. 'Now, Blane, my dear friend, to horse, and away for the Rhine.'

We reached the sallyport and mounted. Dundrennan lifted Marie Louise to her saddle, and kissed her white and trembling hands, which could scarcely grasp the reins.

'Adieu, madame !' said he ; 'in Scotland we may meet again.'

'Farewell, Viscount !' said I ; and tears started to my eyes when I saw his tall and noble figure for the last time 'give my kindest wishes to all our comrades of the Garde du Corps Ecossais. God's blessing ! a long, good night to them and you ! As the song says—

‘What I hae tint through lack o' wit,
I never, never, can recall ;
I trust you'll be my friends as yet ;
Gude night, and joy be wi' you all !’

He waved his plumed hat to us as we spurred round the margin of the lake, and in a direction opposite to that pursued by the deluded messengers of Cardinal Richelien, galloped in safety down the moonlighted path that led towards the far-famed Rhine.

If any of my readers are curious to see in stone and lime a corroboration of the foregoing narrative, let them come with me to the Grampians of Galloway—to that sequestered district so celebrated for the savage grandeur of its scenery, and the feudal exploits of the loyal house of

Kenmure. If my inquiring friend is a sportsman, let him not forget his rod and gun (with sandwiches and a well-filled pocket-pistol), for there the spotted trout, the scaly salmon, the wild duck, the dusky coot and neron, enjoy a lonely world of their own ; and if our wanderer be (as I would prefer) one of the fairer portion of our creation, let her not forget her sketch-book and the language of the flowers.

There, amid the wilds of Glenkens, we will find the ruined tower of Blanerne, above the arched door of which is a carved scutcheon of red stone, bearing the arms of the Scottish Blanes : to wit, in the half-obsolete slang of heraldry, *argent*, a fesse *gules*, with a mullet between two crescents of the first ; in base, a rose of the second, quartered with the *three winglets of Lorraine*, the whole being collared by the order of St. Lazare, crested by a sword, and encircled by a motto, which the venerable ‘muffs’ of the Lyon Court have declared to be

‘HE YAT GIVES QUICKLIE, GIVES TWYSE.’

From the quartering of this escutcheon, as well as from various entries in the parochial register of births, we may be assured that Arthur Blane and his bride lived here long in honour and happiness ; but the reader may wish to know something more of those who have borne a prominent place in these pages.

A few lines will tell their story.

The Marquis of Gordon succeeded to the title of Huntly, and after a long career of brilliant service, returned to Scotland ; where in 1649 he was cruelly executed for his loyalty to the house of Stuart—the common fate of loyalty and love of country in those days.

Patrick Gordon and Viscount Dundrennan both died for the King at Marston Moor ; while Clara D’Ische ended her days in a convent, and was, we believe, the last favourite of Louis XIII.

Duke Charles closed his days in 1665, after maintaining a futile struggle for possession of his dukedom, every acre of which was finally ceded to France by treaty in 1662. Vaudemont also died in exile, and after this the ancient house of Lorraine was heard of no more.

Unlike the villains of narratives in general, the fate of De Bitche is involved in obscurity : but it is more than probable

hat he perished in the desperate war which preceded the treaty of peace that was happily signed at Munster—thus closing a protracted struggle, the dark shadow of which lingers yet in Germany.

NOTES.

1. Of the Scottish Guard of the French kings a short account has already been given in the body of this work. Those who wish to see a more particular narrative of their exploits will find it in the ‘History of the First Foot,’ and *L’Escosse Française* of A. Houston. In 1717 the Guard had dwindled down to four-and-twenty Scottish gentlemen, who were commanded by the Comte de Maille. The following letter or bond of service, given in 1625 by the heir of Ardlogie to ‘my Lord Gordon,’ styled Marquis of Gordon in France, will best explain the constitution of the *Garde du Corps Ecossais* at the time of our story.

‘Be it kenned to all men by these present letters, I Adam Gordon, apparent of Ardlogie, forsomuch as it has pleased the right noble lord, George Lord Gordon, son to the right noble marquis, George Marquis of Huntlie and Captain-in-chief of the companie of Scottish Gensdarmes, under the most Christian king Louis XIII. of France and Navarre, to admit me one of the said companie, therefore I, the said Adam Gordon, heir of Ardlogie, and also John Gordon of Ardlogie and Patrick Gordon of Boigheidis, cautioners and sureties for me, &c., &c., bind and oblige us, and ilk one of us, conjunctlie and severallie, &c., that I, the said Adam Gordon, shall *duly observe and keep the whole musters, duly prepared with one man and two horses, armed at all points, with one case of pistols*, at such places and time as the said captain or commissary shall give warrant and direction to that effect, and also, that I shall be ready and prepared to go to France or elsewhere, to attend my service, at all occasions whensoever I shall be required by my captain, &c., upon forty days’ advertisement so to do, and in case I fail in performance of this present bond, or any part thereof, in that case, I and my cautioners oblige ourselves conjunctlie and severallie to content and pay to the said captain or his assignees the sum of *one thousand and fiftie French crowns*, &c., &c.—This promise written by Alex. Litster in Auld Aberdeen, and subscribed by us at Aberdeen, the 8th day of June, 1625, before these witnesses Sir Alexr. Gordon of Cluny, knight, Patrick Hamiltoun, servitor to my Lord Gordon, and John Gordon, filler up of the premises.’—See ‘Spalding Club Miscellany,’ vol iv. ‘The Gordon Papers,’ etc.

The following commanders of the Scottish Guard appear in the old lists of the French army, during the monarchy :—

- '24 March 1422.—**JEAN STUART**, Seigneur d'Arrelay et d'Aubigne.
 " **JEAN STUART**, Seigneur d'Aubigné, fils du précédent, Chevalier de l'Ordre.
 " **ROBERT STUART**, cousin du précédent, Seigneur d'Aubigné, fait Maréchal de France en 1515.
 " **JACQUES HAMILTON**, Comte d'Arran.
 " **JEAN STUART**, Seigneur d'Aubigné (brother of Mathew, Earl of Lennox).
 " **HENRI**, Prince d'Ecosse.
 " **CHARLES**, Prince d'Ecosse.
 " **GEORGE GOURDON**, Marquis d'Hunteley, l'an 1625.
 " **JACQUES**, Duc d'York, frère de Charles II.

After this, the Guard was commanded by captain-lieutenants, whose names were as follows :—

- ANDREW LORD GRAY, High Sheriff of Forfar.
 The MARÉCHAL SCHOMBERG (by request of Charles II.)
 1667.—**LE CHEVALIER DE HAUTEFEUILLE**.
 " **LE MARQUIS DE PIAZZI**, appellé ordinairement le Marquis de Livourne.
 1682.—**LE MARQUIS DE MOUCY**.
 " **LE MARQUIS DE ROUCY**.
 1707.—**LE MARQUIS DE NESLÉ**.
 " **LE COMTE DE MAILLÉ**.—(*Vide Père Daniel's Histoire.*)

2. The privileges of the Scots in France were most ample, and were every way similar to those enjoyed by French subjects. These privileges were fully defined and confirmed by Henry, King of France in 1558, by a letter of naturalisation registered in the Parliament of Paris, in the Great Council and Chamber of Accoupts ; and in the same year the same privileges were conferred on the French by the Parliament of Scotland. The French document is as follows, briefly translated :—

' HENRI PAR LA GRACE DE DIEU ROY DE FRANCE, to all present and to come, health. As, since the marriage before spoken of, between our very dear and beloved son, the royal dauphin, and our very dear and beloved daughter, the dauphiness and queen of Scotland, his spouse, the deputies of the estates of her kingdom have made the oath of fidelity to my son as their true and natural lord ; by means of this, the subjects of the two realms (which have now long been allied in mutual friendship, favouring and succouring each other) will have permission to approach the royal families of Scotland and France, as if they were one, and desiring, for the better

establishment of this league, and to fortify this friendship **between** our dear subjects, and those of the kingdom of Scotland, and to afford the inhabitants of that loyal country greater facility for visiting the king and queen, when they wish to do so, or of residing near them, or of seeing them, as good and loyal subjects, we give them the same favours, graces, and privileges which are enjoyed by our own people.

'We, having considered these things, and for several other great and reasonable causes, give all the inhabitants of the kingdom of Scotland, subjects of our son, the royal dauphin, and our dear daughter, his wife, permission, by this our authority, to reside and remain in this our kingdom, to have, hold, and possess, any benefice, dignity, or ecclesiastical office, which they can justly and canonically attain, *les bons titres*, which are not contrary to the privileges of the church in France, and to keep and enjoy, and to receive and uplift the fruits and revenues thereof.

'They may also acquire in this kingdom lands or seigneuries under us, all and each of these goods, moveable and immovable, together with all they may gain by gift or succession, *we give them permission to dispose of by last will or otherwise, as they wish*, and that their heirs, or others, to whom they may dispose of them, can succeed, take, and keep possession of their gifts, like other natives of our kingdom, without our Procureur General, or any other officer hereafter acquiring any right of interference; and that the subjects of the kingdom of Scotland may enjoy their benefits without molestation. And to all those who wish it, we ordain that they may possess in our kingdom lands and seigneuries, as in the kingdom of Scotland; but subject to our obedience, without being questioned or paying to our successors any indemnity, the sum or value of which we have, in consideration, discharged in favour of our dear son and daughter, by this present act, signed under our hand. We announce to all judges, and others whom it may concern, &c., to the courts of Parliament, Grand Council, and Accompts of Paris, to all our bailiffs, seneschais, prevosts, and others, our justiciars and officers, or their lieutenants, present and to come, that of our kindness, we give licence and permission to all the inhabitants of the kingdom of Scotland to enjoy these benefits peaceably and without molestation, for such is our will and pleasure, &c., &c.

'Donné à Villiers-cousterez, un mois de Juin, l'an de grace mil cinq cent cinquante et huict. Et de nostre regne le douzième.'

Until the Revolution, the effects of all strangers, *Scots excepted*, dying in France were liable to seizure by the law of the land, though the heir was upon the spot; and the reader may remember Sterne's indignant outburst on this subject in the introduction to his '*Sentimental Journey*.' Many traces of the ancient Scoto-French

alliance may be found in Scotland, and the memory of it lingers yet in the hearts and traditions of the peasantry in the south of France, who still remember the achievements of the Garde du Corps Ecossais.

3. The following is the letter referred to in the note to chapter **IX.** :-

‘ MONSIEUR, Toul, le 6 Xbre, 1852.
‘ J’ai répondu à votre honore du 28 Avril, 1851, qu’il n’y a plus de traces, dans la Cathédrale du Toul, du monument qui a été élevé à la mémoire de Sir John Hepburn, ou que du moins je n’en ai aucune connaissance.

Depuis ce temps, le Gouvernement a fait faire une grande restauration, qui a fait connaître exactement le lieu où votre compatriote a été inhumé.

Mais le cercueil a été scrupuleusement respecté, et le caveau exactement refermé, et le lieu reste dans l’état ancien, jusqu’à ce que le ministère aura pris une détermination sur la restauration de la partie de l’édifice où se trouve le tombeau; le monument a probablement été détruit par la tourmente révolutionnaire de ‘93: l’année prochaine, je pourrai vous communiquer la description exacte du cercueil et de la pierre qui a été cachée, en grande partie, par d’énormes bois d’échafaudage.

‘ Aujourd’hui, je puis vous faire connaître l’inscription, qui est sur une plaque de plomb, placée sur le cercueil, vous la trouverez ci-dessous.

‘ Daignez agréer, Monsieur, l’hommage de votre serviteur,
‘ GEORGES.

‘ Curé de la Cathédrale.’

‘ DOM OSSA JOHANNIS HEBVRNISCOTI EQVITISAVRATI EXFCITVS GALLICI CAMPI MARESCALLI. QVAID-TABERNAS. SCLOPETO. TRAIECTVS OCCVBVIT VIII. IDVS IVLII MDCXXXVI. REQVIESCAT IN . PACE.

‘ J’ai l’honneur de vous faire observer que l’inscription ci-dessus est tout-à-fait conforme à l’original, et qu’en 1836 ce n’est point Louis XIV., mais bien Louis XIII., qui occupait le trône de Franc-

‘ G.

‘ M. James Grant, &c., Edinburgh.’

THE END.

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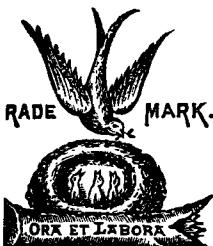
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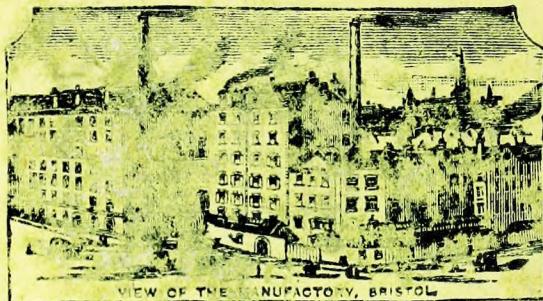
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